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Evidence of Wonders: Writing American Identity

in the Early Modern Transatlantic World

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Evidence of Wonders: Writing American Identity

in the Early Modern Transatlantic World

by

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for my parents, who have always believed in me,

and for my co-directors,

Katherine Arens and William J. Scheick,

who have guided me across perilous waters

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Evidence of Wonders: Writing American Identity

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Narratives about "wonders" pervaded early modern European cultures. Reports of unusual phenomena such as "monster" babies, sea storms wrecking a ship, and the acts of demons permeated both popular and elite writings, from news reports to scientific journals.

To date, research on these texts has concentrated on English or continental writers, not American colonials. Yet wonders played a potent role at the colonial margins of the expanding empires. Reclaiming these influential but forgotten texts, this dissertation investigates seventeenth-century New England wonder writings and their role in the political relationship between England and its American colonies. Ultimately, it shows how New England Congregationalists used transnational Protestant and scientific rhetorics to develop a discourse of political legitimacy and American exceptionalism, and in the process, created new forms of writing and speaking.

The study begins by discussing the most publicized event of seventeenth-century New England, King Philip's War (1675-76), and the sensational reports about it written by individuals such as William Hubbard, Nathaniel Saltonstall, John Easton, and Increase Mather. These publications exemplify the identity politics at stake in texts about the

colonies, especially in the narrative and reportage genres that would later carry wonder accounts. A second chapter re-examines this historical context from a broader angle, situating New England wonder writings within the period's transnational legal and philosophical discourse about empire, including John Cotton's influential rationale for banishing Roger Williams. The project then examines three case studies: a) sea providence narratives (featuring Edward Gibbons' and Anthony Thacher's stories as recorded by John Winthrop, James Janeway, and Increase Mather); b) natural history writings about "curious" objects, lightning storms, or apparitions (by John Winthrop, John Winthrop, Jr., Increase Mather, and Cotton Mather); and c) published arguments about Salem witchcraft (by Cotton Mather, Deodat Lawson, and Increase Mather). By recovering the political and social fields that these texts were intended to negotiate, the project shows how New Englanders used the shocking and vivid subject matter of traditional narratives to transact a shift in group identity, emphasizing the Americanness of their experiences to assert their political and spiritual distinction.

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Introduction: The Wonders of the "Westerne End of the World"

The Order of Wonders

> There was a Maid in that Town (one *Elizabeth Knap*) who in the Moneth of *October*, Anno. 1671. was taken after a very strange manner, sometimes weeping, sometimes laughing, sometimes roaring hideously, with violent motions and agitations of her body, crying out *Money, Money,* &c. In *November* following, her Tongue for many hours together was drawn like a semicircle up to the roof of her Mouth, not to be removed, though some tried with their fingers to do it. Six Men were scarce able to hold her in some of her fits, but she would skip about the House yelling and looking with a most frightful Aspect. *December* 17. Her Tongue was drawn out of her mouth to an extraordinary length; and now a *Daemon* began manifestly to speak in her. Many words were uttered wherein are the *Labial Letters*, without any motion of her Lips, which was a clear demonstration that the voice was not her own. Sometimes Words were spoken seeming to proceed out of her throat, when her Mouth was shut. Sometimes with her Mouth wide open, without the use of any of the Organs of speech. The things then uttered by the Devil were chiefly Railings and Revilings of Mr. *Willard* (who was at that time a Worthy and Faithful Pastor to the Church in *Groton*.)
>
> —Increase Mather, *Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences*, New England, 1684

Puzzlement, awe, and amazement; an unsettling sense that something has happened that cannot be explained; excitement; curiosity; loathing; perhaps fear—even now, hundreds of years after their composition, seventeenth-century narratives about "wonders," "marvels," and "remarkables" work their primary effects. Ubiquitous to the point of being almost invisible, such narratives pervaded popular discourse in Renaissance and early modern European cultures, circulating orally in pubs and

commons, and in print through almanacs, gazettes, bestselling wonder compilations, ballads, and broadsides. While the twenty-first century has generally sidelined such tales to the tabloids, in the seventeenth century they also permeated learned and elite writings. Thousands of treatises and reports discussed wonders and remarkables. Inquiring into these subjects lay at the heart of scholarly labor from the medieval period through the early eighteenth century.

The concept of the "preternatural," historians Lorraine Daston and Katherine Park have argued, was developed by twelfth-century medieval philosophers as something of a catch-all category for phenomena lying beyond the natural order as defined by Aristotle ("that which is always or that which is for the most part"[1]) but just short of the supernatural (when God directly alters his creation without using nature as an intermediary means). Between the two poles lay the category of the preternatural, a term derived from Aquinas's phrase *praeter naturae ordinem*, meaning "other than the order of nature." This category included all sorts of strange and unusual occurrences, but unlike supernatural miracles, these phenomena nevertheless issued from secondary (or natural) causes, not from a suspension of ordinary providence. Freaks of nature such as a "hog-faced" woman or conjoined twins, thus, fit here alongside unusual but naturally wrought acts of divine providence, such as sea storms wrecking a ship. The category also included the acts of demons, whom Aquinas thought could work *through* natural means but were unable to operate in a *super*natural way. Although the philosophy regarding such

[1] Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 6.2, 1027a12, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle: Revised Oxford Translation*, 2 vols., ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), vol. 2, 1621.

phenomena changed between the twelfth and seventeenth centuries, the categories themselves remained relatively stable.[2]

In early modern Europe, England, and America, people's fascination with the preternaturally strange surfaced in diverse publications. In 1573, for example, the French surgeon Ambroise Paré published an influential treatise, one of many being written, on monsters: *De monstres et prodiges*.[3] Not long thereafter, Sir Francis Bacon, Lord Chancellor of England, launched his program to reform natural philosophy in *The Advancement of Learning* (1605). Bacon's plan called for, among other things, a "history of marvels," including a complete collection of monsters, "hetroclites, or irregularities of nature," "sorceries, witchcrafts, dreams, divinations" and other instances of "the works of nature digressing from the ordinary course of generations." For, argued Bacon "it is not yet known in what cases, and how far, effects attributed to superstition do participate of natural causes.'"[4] In various ways, the Accademia dei Lyncei at Rome (attended by Galileo), Florence's Accademia del Cimento (founded 1657), the Royal Society of London (founded 1660), the Paris Académie Royale des Sciences (founded 1666), the Schweinfurt Academia Naturae Curiosorum (founded 1652), and the Berlin Akademie der Wissenschaften (founded 1700) all followed Bacon's lead and produced journals to publish reports of their finds. To widen their collections of strange facts, they enlisted the

[2] Lorraine Daston and Katherine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature, 1150-1750* (New York: Zone Books, 1998), 120-21.

[3] On monsters in the historical imagination, see Marie-Hélène Huet, *Monstrous Imagination* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993); C. J. S. Thompson, *The History and Lore of Freaks* (London: Senate, 1930); and John Block Friedman, *The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981); in addition to Daston and Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature*.

[4] Francis Bacon, *Advancement of Learning*, in *The Works of Francis Bacon*, vol. 3, ed. James Spedding, Robert Leslie Ellis and Douglas Denon Heath (Boston: Brown and Tagger, 1860-64), 330-32.

help of the uneducated and foreigners. Henry Oldenburg, secretary of the Royal Society, for example, solicited letters from sailors in the Atlantic and from colonists in America.[5] Thus it was that in 1670, John Winthrop, Jr., governor of Connecticut in New England, published in London a letter—"Concerning Some Natural Curiosities of Those Parts, especially a Very Strange and Very Curiously Contrived Fish, Sent for the Repository of the R. Society"[6]—in the *Philosophical Transactions*.

As the academic journals published their strange facts, English publishers printed preternatural matters for a broader public. Thus Winthrop's discovery would not have sounded esoteric to a common Englishwoman, who might have read years earlier of *A Most True and marvelous straunge wonder, the lyke hath seldom ben seene, of xvii Monstrous fisshes, taken from Suffolke, at Downame brydge, within myle of Pisidik. the xi day of October* (1588). Such reports could travel more widely by the mid-seventeenth century with the rapid increase of news publications in England. By one count, 320 serial publications circulated at various times in England between 1641 and 1655.[7] Among the various wonders and remarkables commonly printed were such titles as *Five Strange Wonders concerning the flying in the Air of a Black Coffin* (1659); *The Full and True Relation of a Dreadfull Storm . . . Accompanied with . . . Hail-stones, some of them being above Two Pounds in weight* (1680); *A Full and True Relation of the Death and Slaughter of a Man and his Son . . . slain by Thunder and Lightening* (1680); and even

[5] On Oldenburg's interest in foreign sources of information, see Barbara J. Shapiro, *A Culture of Fact: England, 1550-1720* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), esp. 74-76.

[6] Extracted in *Philosophical Transactions* 5 (1670), 1151-53.

[7] M.A. Shaaber, *Some Forerunners of the Newspapers in England* (Philadelphia, 1929), 144-56.

Strange News from Barkshire, or an Apparition of Several Ships in the Air, which seemed to be Fighting (1679). The *Mirabilis Annus, or The Year of Prodigies and Wonders* of 1661 and 1662—produced by dissenting Protestants to document God's displeasure with the Restoration—noted that for the year 1661 alone, "the particulars seen in the Heavens are in number fifty-four, those in the Earth twenty three, those in the Waters ten; the Accidents and Judgements befalling several persons twenty seven."[8] These exciting reports continued into the early eighteenth century, their popularity seized upon by such authors as Daniel Defoe in his *Wonderful History of all the Storms and Hirricanes, Earthquakes &c That have happen'd in England for above 500 Years Past* (1704) and *The Life and Strange Surprizing Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (1719). Meanwhile, almanacs recorded the wonders of comets, earthquakes, and heavenly eclipses in formats accessible even to the barely literate,[9] and ballads sang out blazing stars, attacks of thunder, monstrous births, showers of wheat, and the reports of heavy guns.[10]

Popular fascination with wonders had long drawn from travel writings about the exotic East, especially such works as *Wonders of the East*, an eleventh-century encyclopedia of eastern exotica; Marco Polo's account of his travels to the court of the Great Khan in *Il milione* (1298/99); *Mandeville's Travels* (1480, comp. c. 1357) ; Linschoten's *Discours of Voyages into the East and West Indies* (1598); and Lithgow's *Delectable, and True Discourse of an Admired and Painefull Peregrination from*

[8] Preface to *Annalis Mirabilis, or The Year of Prodigies and Wonders* (London, 1661).

[9] See Bernard Capp, *English Almanacs 1500-1800* (Ithaca, N. Y., 1979), ch. 6.

[10] See Hyder Rollins, ed. *The Pack of Autolycus or Strange and Terrible News of Ghosts, Apparitions . . . as told in Broadside Ballads of the Years 1624-93* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1927), 36-43, 117-21, 162-67, and passim.

Scotland to the most famous kingdomes in Europe, Asia and Affricke (1614). With increasingly frequent voyaging into the true East as well as the "new East"—the Americas—both popular and philosophical interests in wonders began to feed on reports about the edges of the known world. Promotional writings for North American colonies, such as Columbus's first letter from America, evoked—and sometimes borrowed directly from—earlier exotic reports on wonders.[11] Appearing individually in promotional tracts such as Thomas Hariot's *Brief and True Report of the new found land of Virginia* (1588) and in anthologies such as Samuel Purchas's immensely popular *Purchas His Pilgrimes* (1625), wondrous information rapidly multiplied as travel and migration increased.

Beyond their philosophical and popular appeal, moreover, writings about wonders also attracted the interest of the religious. Reports of individuals affected by strange divine providences grew hugely popular over the course of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Especially influential were collections or anthologies of such accounts, such as Stephen Batman's *Doome warning all men to Judgmente: Wherein are contayned for the most parte all the straunge Prodigies hapned in the Worlde* (1581); Thomas Beard's *Theatre of Gods Judgments* (multiple editions from 1597 to 1648), Samuel Clark's *Mirrour or Looking Glass both for Saints, and Sinners, Held forth in about two thousand Examples: Wherein is presented, as Gods Wonderful Mercies to the one, so his severe Judgments against the Other* (multiple editions from 1646 to 1671);

[11] Both Mary B. Campbell and Stephen Greenblatt argue that Columbus appropriated wonder rhetoric to promote further voyages to the Americas, though they do so in different ways. See Campbell, *The Witness and the Other World: Exotic European Travel Writing, 400-1600* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), esp. ch. 5; and Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

Richard Baxter's *Certainty of the World of Spirits* (1691); and William Turner's *Compleat History of the Most Remarkable Providences* (1697). Serving as tools for spiritual reflection and as proofs of the invisible world, wonders played a valued role in the lives of Christians and especially Protestants, even as Protestant leaders attempted to stop commoners from using magic (or magic-like Catholic rites) to solve their daily problems.[12] These religious interests, in turn, were not unrelated to the work on strange facts undertaken by the Royal Society. Even the Society's most prominent members, such as Joseph Glanvill, considered it critical to inquire into magic and sorcery, producing books such as *Saducismus Triumphatus; Or, a Full and Plaine Evidence Concerning Witches and Apparitions* (1681).

In her attempts to trace out common discourses of "fact" during the seventeenth century, Barbara Shapiro has noted that "contemporary wonders and marvels were news to the periodical publisher, providential events with moral implications to the preacher and theologian, and, to the virtuoso, the subject of reports offered to the Royal Society and in the *Philosophical Transactions*."[13] The ability of wonder narratives to serve such varied cultural and intellectual purposes ensured their centrality in English printed discourse until their gradual rejection by rationalist thinkers in the mid-eighteenth century. During the seventeenth century, however, there seemed to be no end of ink for wonders.

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[12] On the connection between anti-Catholicism and anti-magic efforts, see Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971).

[13] Shapiro, *Culture of Fact*, 99.

A Rhetoric of Wonders: Goals of the Present Study

But what *is* the literature or discourse of wonders? The term "wonder" is more than a little imprecise. For the writer of *Mandeville's Travels*, a "wonder" was a discrete object often associated with an exotic and foreign land, such as a large gourd that, when ripe, opened to reveal a small animal growing inside it known as a Scythian lamb. Such a rare item was to be collected and occasionally displayed as a symbol of power.[14] In sixteenth-century travel narratives of conquest and colonization, wonders stretched to a larger scale, encompassing Spain's entire new American "possessions" as well as the sense of awe and pleasure they inspired in their European witnesses. More confusing still, both for wondrous objects possessed and displayed (such as Pocahontas on view in London) as well as the subjective states they engendered (wonder and awe), discourse about "wonders" refused even to carry a consistent value connotation. While always *powerful*, wonders were not always *desirable*, as when Cotton Mather characterized the so-called witches and demons wreaking havoc in Salem, Massachusetts, as so many *Wonders of the Invisible World*. Nor did each of these meanings successively replace the others or remain confined within distinct social groups. From the medieval period at least into the early eighteenth century, the various meanings everywhere coexisted.

A "wonder," then, was less a specific *type* of object or event—and "wonder narratives" less a precise type of genre—than a kind of *category* into which diverse phenomena could be fit. The most obvious selection criterion was epistemological. A

[14] Daston and Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature*, 35.

phenomenon's designation as a "wonder" or as "wondrous" depended upon its lying somewhere beyond the borders of the fully known world (geographical, philosophical, or social). A wonder was, by definition, something not fully explained by current knowledge, noumenally participating in an other world and the mystery thereof. Yet the phenomenon could not be so strange as to be wholly unidentifiable or, more fundamentally, unspeakable or invisible. Its status as a wonder depended upon its being (to borrow a few phrases from a present-day politician), a "*known* unknown," rather than a wholly "*unknown* unknown."[15] The category of wonder was not unbounded, and indeed, its objects tended to be presented according to a limited set of representational forms. Nevertheless, the wonders that appear in the following pages were not so well-known that they had been completely reduced to stereotypes or set pieces, as older instances generally were between the fifth and fifteenth centuries, as the scholar Mary B. Campbell has shown.[16] They included truly *new* phenomena, especially phenomena unique to the "new" territories of America. In fact, one feature of wonder discourse that changed between Odoric of Poderon and Cotton Mather was the extent to which the old experts on wonders were replaced by speakers who rested their authority on an

[15] United States Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld as quoted in *Pieces of Intelligence: The Existential Poetry of Donald H. Rumsfeld,* ed. Hart Seely, (New York: The Free Press, 2003):

> As we know,
> There are known knowns.
> There are things we know we know.
> We also know
> There are known unknowns.
> That is to say
> We know there are some things
> We do not know.
> But there are also unknown unknowns,
> The ones we don't know we don't know.

[16] Campbell, *Witness and the Other World.*

acquaintance with the new, particularly through the "new" world of America and the emergent "new science."

While recognizing the epistemological parameters of the "wonder" label, we have not truly grasped what a "wonder" meant until we consider how the category was *rhetorically* constituted—how it acquired meaning by the way people used it in applied, persuasive discourse, to pursue their own ends in given circumstances with chosen audiences. Fully functional within each of the overlapping intellectual frameworks of the period—religion, magic, and natural philosophy—and in both popular and educated circles, talk about wonders necessarily shaped relations in the social world, too. We know the extreme cases of such relations—the witchcraft trials across the Germanic center of the Holy Roman Empire leading to, by current estimates, 20,000 to 25,000 witchcraft executions between 1560 and 1660;[17] the 1634 possessions in Loudun, France; and the 1692 Salem trials in New England, when men and women accused of working wonders were hanged as criminals, crushed to death, or burned. We have more recently acknowledged that literatures of exotic eastern wonders helped lure Europeans across the Atlantic to plunder and appropriate the Americas and the labor of native American peoples. The former subject has generated its own scholarly cottage industry for at least 30 years; the latter has been a small but growing subject of inquiry for about 15 years. Beyond these instances, however, scholars and especially Americanists have almost completely ignored the more quotidian—and more fundamental—forms and uses of

[17] W. Behringer as cited by William Monter, "Witch Trials in Continental Europe, 1560-1660," in *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: The Period of the Witch Trials*, ed. Bengt Ankarloo and Stuart Clark (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 13.

wonder discourses. I offer this study—primarily an inquiry into religious speech but, by necessity, also a study of the rhetorics of science and imperial politics in the seventeenth century—as a corrective.

Upon close inspection, we will find that the rhetorical rather than the epistemological factor most fundamentally constituted a wonder. For example, in the case of witchcraft accusations, we now have some ideas why, in the Renaissance and early modern periods, certain persons accused others of witchcraft, and what the social, religious, and even philosophical effects of such speech were. We also readily acknowledge that discourse on witchcraft was thoroughly political (although I will later argue that we still fail to grasp the full political dimensions of this rhetoric at Salem). The *primary* materials in witchcraft discourses were produced not by philosophers, but by historical actors, from the eye-witnesses who told their stories, to the community members, clergy, and judges who listened, to the editors and publishers who presented these stories in print to a fascinated public as documented witchcraft cases. Each did so in the midst of historical circumstances that defined the consequences of such discourse. In the cases of other sorts of wonder discourse, however, we have done a much less thorough job of investigating how the discourse was shaped by and used for social and political ends. And yet, invariably, a story was a wonder story not merely because it fit some abstract definition of a wonder, but also because historical actors chose to present it as such.

As a result, the present study asks how a broad range of narratives about wonders *functioned* within a specific socio-historical context, particularly to authorize Protestant

religious communities in the increasingly chaotic political terrain of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. In particular, how did wonder writings function for dissenting Protestants living in America: the land of wonders itself? To answer these questions, this project takes Protestant New England as its primary focal point but relocates New England in the transatlantic, transnational world from which it has so often been abstracted by Americanist scholars. Thus, writings about people's wondrous religious experiences in seventeenth-century New England—experiences such as traumatic sea "providences," visions of comets and apparitions in the sky, providential encounters with indigenous peoples, demonic possessions, sightings of preternatural objects, and other spiritual activity mediated through the American natural environment—occupy the pages of my study.

One goal of this project is simply to recover these voices and the often astounding stories they tell about colonists' experience of North America during the colonies' early years. The texts provide some of the earliest narratives of ordinary people's experiences in American colonies, however redacted by clergymen's editing, and they reveal the quality of popular religious experience during the period. Yet they remain largely unread. In rediscovering these writings, the study also pursues a larger goal of situating the texts within the web of forces that put the colonists and their communities under stress during the seventeenth century, and from within this historical frame, to discern both an evolving American public identity and the rhetoric that constructed it. Thus the project is primarily a rhetorical and intellectual history, recovering not only these many voices but what their narratives *meant* and how they functioned in their own time. As we will see,

public reports about such wondrous experiences in New England could serve as tools to stake claims for group legitimacy far outside the pale of Europe, to promote community values and encourage certain kinds of experience in the American world, and to orient the future actions of both individuals and the larger colonial polity.

Rethinking the Wonders: Project Outline

Over the past fifteen years, researchers working on wonders and related phenomena—often delving into writings traditionally untouched by scholars—have overturned long-held assumptions about the early modern period.

Historians, for example, have broken down previous scholarly distinctions between popular and elite cultural worldviews[18] and have discovered close linkages between the developing discourses of knowledge in history, law, news reporting, travel writing, natural philosophy, and religion.[19] In related studies, a number of literature scholars have focused on the specific literary qualities that at once connected these various forms of writing and revolutionized earlier generic conventions.[20]

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[18] See esp. David D. Hall, *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment: Popular Religious Belief in Early New England* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989); Michael P. Winship, *Seers of God: Puritan Providentialism in the Restoration and Early Enlightenment* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996); and Peter Harrison, *The Bible, Protestantism, and the Rise of Natural Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

[19] See Shapiro, *Culture of Fact*; Margaret J. Osler, "The Canonical Imperative: Rethinking the Scientific Revolution" in *Rethinking the Scientific Revolution,* ed. Margaret J. Osler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Ann Blair, "Mosaic Physics and the Search for a Pious Natural Philosophy in the Late Renaissance," *Isis* (2000): 32-58; Lorraine Daston, "Marvelous Facts and Miraculous Evidence in Early Modern Europe," *Critical Inquiry* 18 (1991): 93-124; and Lorraine Daston and Katherine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature.*

[20] See Campbell, *Witness and the Other World* as well as *Wonder and Science: Imagining Worlds in Early Modern Europe*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999); James Hartman, *Providence Tales and the Birth*

A few scholars have taken this work a step further, drawing wonders down from the realm of intellectual history into the rougher terrain of politics. They have offered powerful insights into how early European explorers used wonders to justify their enterprises (Stephen Greenblatt, for example),[21] and how discourses about wonders drove religio-political contests in war-torn seventeenth-century Europe (for example, Michel de Certeau).[22] To date, however, even this research has concentrated on English or continental writers. Yet all agree that wonders played a particularly potent role at the colonial margins of the expanding European political arena.

As a corrective, this project studies wonder writings, many of which have never been seriously examined, from within the American colonies to discover how colonial Protestants used them to negotiate socio-political challenges. It pursues an extended case study of wonder writings produced in New England, most of which were initially recounted by lay people and then later edited by colonial elites. Drawing on a range of writings from both print and archival sources—sea providence narratives written by or told about New England travelers in Atlantic waters; natural history and natural philosophy writings; and the published arguments about the Salem witchcraft trials—this study explores how wonders were seen as one of the chief assets of foreign colonial

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of American Literature (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999); and Michael McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel, 1660-1740* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987).

[21] Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions*.

[22] Michel de Certeau, *The Possession at Loudun*, trans. Michael B. Smith (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000); and *The Mystic Fable*, trans. Michael B. Smith (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992). Michael P. Winship, a skilled intellectual historian, also pursues the relationship between providentialist interpretive practices and Restoration politics, but he does so with the primary goal of using political history to explain a shift in the period's providentialist *mentalité,* rather than the reverse—reading providentialist writings to see how they were used in the period's politics.

possessions, as the domain of Protestant religious experience, and as the site for a political rhetoric between colony and metropolis. Setting these questions specifically in the New England colonial context, I am able to recover how representations of wonders, when carefully edited for publication, took on political significance in moments of historical crisis such as the 1660 restoration of the monarchy, the Massachusetts Bay Colony's 1684 loss of its charter, and the 1688 so-called "Glorious Revolution."

An introductory section places colonial wonder writings in historical context. Chapter One, "The Order of Documents," discusses the most publicized historical event of seventeenth-century New England: the colonists' devastating war with Philip, leader of the Wampanoags and of a broader Indian resistance. A parade of sensational news reports, histories, and polemics about the bloody affair appeared in both New England and England. They revealed strains between New Englanders' ideals and practices while they also undermined the stated reason for colonizing: to help the Indians. These publications exemplify the identity politics—and potential political consequences—at stake in texts published about the colonies, even in narrative and reportage genres. Chapter Two, "The Case for Colonial Rhetorical Studies" re-examines this historical context from a broader angle, showing how the full contours of New England's wonder writings emerge only when situated within the period's transnational legal and philosophical discourse about empire. As Spain, France, and England entered the Atlantic world in earnest, their leading philosophers and jurists formulated careful arguments to underwrite and guide these ventures. These arguments not only influenced how nations conducted expansionist activities, but also shaped how Europeans constructed their

emerging national and colonial identities. By uncovering two major rhetorics of legitimation used by English jurists to represent the New England colonies, and then how colonial leaders themselves used this same rhetoric to quell political challengers, we begin to identify several key strategies that would shape the colonists' other writings about themselves.

The next two chapters discuss colonial writings about wonders in the natural world. Chapter Three, "'Wonders in the Deep': Atlantic Sea Providence Narratives and New England Identity" considers sea-voyage narratives from the first several generations of colonization in America, including narratives by Edward Gibbons and Anthony Thacher as well as anthologies by James Janeway and Increase Mather. The sea providence narrative was one of the early modern period's most established narrative forms for recounting commoners' experiences of religious wonders—a form taken up most famously by Daniel Defoe. It held a significant track record of serving nations' or groups' self-promotional agenda. Written from the particular vantage point of struggling American colonists but within the context of prior English uses of the genre, individuals' wondrous experiences at sea were made politically and socially to validate the English colonies in New England.

Chapter Four, "'Curiosa Americana': Reading Wondrous Natural Facts at the Edge of the World," recovers fact collection projects in early America, archives gathering eye-witness accounts of natural wonders for both religious and natural philosophical (what we now call "scientific") purposes. Natural philosophers' and theologians' approaches to interpreting the natural world were much more closely related in this

period than is often acknowledged, and both privileged first-hand experiences of nature at the edges of the known world as the best means to acquire true knowledge. It is not surprising, then, that both colonial leaders (including John Winthrop, Jr., Cotton Mather, and the Commissioners of the United Colonies) and Royal Society members in England (especially Henry Oldenburg, John Woodward, and Samuel Hartlib) encouraged ordinary colonists to search out and report unusual phenomena or experiences in the natural world, considered evidence of natural and divine principles. And report they did. The people's stories, considered as crucial "matters of fact," provided the resources for Bacon's "advancement of learning," even as they composed a mosaic representation of America's place in the expanding geo-political map and the divine scheme of God.

The most famous site of early American wonder discourse has long been Salem, Massachusetts and its infamous witch hunt. Less well known is the connection between the Salem affair and the colony's receipt of a new charter from William and Mary of England. Thus my concluding chapter, "'Wonders of the Invisible World': Representing the American 'Land of Spirit' into the Eighteenth Century" investigates the role of wonder discourse and natural science in the Salem witch trials considered in the context of the Glorious Revolution and the 1691 English takeover of Massachusetts. It pursues the relationship between wonder literatures and the defense of the colony's autonomy in the wake of new constricting English laws, and then briefly traces wonder rhetoric beyond the seventeenth century, suggesting how these early texts established a persistent rhetorical linkage between theology, science, and group identity continued into the discourse of American eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

By recovering the political and social fields that these new narrative forms were intended to negotiate, the project shows how New Englanders used transnational Protestant and scientific rhetorics to develop a discourse of political legitimacy and exceptionalism. This public speech aimed at authorizing their community against increasing political pressures from abroad within an emerging tradition of Protestant reform. It argues why colonial editors would consider using the shocking and violent subject matter of traditional stories, familiar from narratives such as Anthony Thacher's devastating 1635 shipwreck account or Ann Cole's 1662 struggle with demonic fits, to transact a shift in group identity, emphasizing the Americanness of their experiences to assert their political and spiritual distinction.

The project thus centrally ties into emerging areas of scholarship while advancing them in what I hope are fresh ways. In particular, within the context of colonial American studies, the project performs a kind of historical recovery work of lay voices. However, rather than naively celebrating the unmitigated agency of the marginal voice, it recognizes editorial mediation between lay and elite in publishing, and how lay voices could get used by elites to advance political agenda. In turn, within a larger transatlantic frame, it shows how colonists (especially, but not only, religious migrants) on the margins of the empire could use that space to fortify their authority, rather than diminish it. And within the terrain of literary-historical studies of the early modern period—an era when renaissance worldviews were slowly being revised by the new science and enlightenment rationalism—it examines how traditional forms of religious speech joined with the developing natural philosophy to create new forms of writing and speaking.

For the most part, these latter two topics have been pursued by scholars of English or European history and rhetoric, not American. And yet the area of earlier American literature studies has of late been the site for a large-scale reexamination of what the category and study of American literature should be. Although traditionally focused on writings closely connected to the emergence of the United States of America, the study of American literature has recently expanded, as many scholars began to study the diverse nations and groups involved in the Americas prior to and after the formation of the United States.[23] These new approaches include studies of groups around the Atlantic world and the connections between them, exemplified by two major historians' recent discussions of the work now being conducted under the rubric of "transatlanticism."[24] It has also led scholars to recover previously overlooked texts (such as sermons and hymns by native Americans, commonplace books by women, and popular "low-brow"' material such as chapbooks) and to frame traditional problems within richer frameworks.[25] Scholars of early American history and literature have, in particular, been attempting to recover the ability to read multiple native American histories and cultural productions, to uncover the voices of ordinary people, to trace the emergence of slavery and a Black

[23] See, for example, William C. Spengemann, "Early American Literature and the Project of Literary History," *American Literary History* 5 (1993): 513-41.

[24] David Armitage, "Three Concepts of Atlantic History," in *The British Atlantic World, 1500-1800,* ed. David Armitage and Michael J. Braddick, (New York: Palgrave 2002), 11-29; and Joyce E. Chaplin, "Expansion and Exceptionalism in Early American History," *The Journal of American History* 89 (2003): 1-25.

[25] The scope of these changes appears clearly in the three most recent early American literature anthologies: *The English Literatures of America, 1500-1800*, ed. Myra Jehlen and Michael Warner (New York: Routledge, 1997); *The Literatures of Colonial America: An Anthology*, ed. Susan Castillo and Ivy Schweitzer (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2001); and *Early American Writings*, ed. Carla Mulford, Angela Vietto, and Amy E. Winans (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). Although varying in organization and emphasis, they testify to the growth of early American literature as a distinct sub-field of American literary studies, and to this sub- field's broadening definition of American literature.

Atlantic, to incorporate French, Dutch, Spanish, German-language, and Portuguese voices active in the period, and at the most general level, to understand the sites and systems of cultural exchange and of literary activity in a period for which the present-day United States does not adequately delineate the parameters for study.

Situating myself within this broadened frame, my goal here is to recover a discourse that operated transnationally, and also to provide a basis for comparing how Protestant groups—especially those in colonial situations—developed strategies of religious speech in political contexts.

Notes on Method

The subsequent sections of my study are primarily concerned with how common people's speech about wondrous experiences, speech shaped by traditional religious narrative forms and laden with religious meanings, was taken up and used by New England leaders to advance a politically useful representation of the New England colonies. The project thus gravitates around a number of key terms and questions linked to colonial self-presentations. The notion of *identity*—considered here as a strategic and imaginary public representation of a group, rather than as that group's true innate, essential quality—significantly organizes my analysis of colonial rhetoric. *Rhetoric* is also a term that will frequently recur in this project. Although used variously by scholars, I mean only to identify the texts considered here as historically situated acts of speech or writing, presented according to familiar protocol, and with, at some level or another,

persuasive intent. Similarly, the notion of *appropriation* recurs in the following pages. As I use the term, it suggests how various groups took up and re-read cultural discourses to negotiate with one another—in these cases, the New England clergy with the laity, and New England leaders with observers in Europe and England. An interest in appropriation, in turn, requires the frame of analysis to widen beyond the texts themselves to include their production, editing, publication, circulation, and consumption in particular historical contexts. As rhetoric, they are not just texts, but also speech acts in history.

Likewise, the concept of *representation* enables my project to foreground the interaction between textual productions and historical events, because the texts under review attempt to reflect actual historical occurrences and themselves engage the historical scene. Finally, the notion of *religion* operates here as a fundamental term, as well. Seemingly transparent, it too will function more as a frame for analysis than as a definitional building block. As Keith Thomas demonstrated in *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (1971) and as present-day historians of science are also beginning to acknowledge, religion was at once pervasive, hybrid, and continuous with other mental frameworks in the seventeenth century—a fact sometimes counterintuitive in the present day, when our own culture separates scientific, religious, and magical worldviews. "Religion" in the seventeenth century did not merely denote sectarianism; it was an all-encompassing worldview which assumed that every act was part of creation and divine providence.

To a reader in tune with recent literary and historical scholarship, each of these terms will evoke not only the specific senses outlined above and developed later in this

study, but also their previous usages by theorists and scholars. It may thus prove helpful to elaborate briefly on the theoretical / methodological influences that shape the terms of these questions. I do so not only to clarify the project that follows, but also to give due credit to those whose novel and persuasive arguments this study has absorbed.

This project primarily contributes to the work of a small but influential group of scholars studying religion and religious speech in the late Renaissance through early modern periods in Europe and the Americas. These scholars have taken up religion not in terms of sects or theologies, but as comprehensive epistemologies, or what Foucault has termed *epistemes*. Although intellectual historians of religion have produced numerous treatises about religious practice and belief during this period, few historians, rhetoricians, or literary scholars have attended specifically to religious *speech*—as a persuasive tool, or literary art, or both. Instead, with a primarily historical rather than discursive focus, they tend to view it as a window through which to peer into a group's historical practices or even their broader historical *mentalité*. Even those scholars who have taken a particular interest in the rhetorical practices of religious communities—in the early colonial period, Perry Miller provides the most influential example—often have done so to pursue another end: to answer questions about people's general ideas *about* speech or their institutionalized practices *surrounding* speech (e.g., how Harvard taught rhetoric). Neither Miller nor his revisionist successors have studied how particular religious writings actually performed in a given situation—excepting work on a few well-known documents such as Mary Rowlandson's captivity narrative. Generally, they have

not asked what kinds of tools these writings provided to individuals and intellectuals accustomed to arguing for authority.

To be sure, in U.S. English departments, Sacvan Bercovitch's studies of American Protestant discourse in *The Puritan Origins of the American Self* (1975) and *The American Jeremiad* (1978) have proved enormously influential. They helped to organize and set the tone for what Frederick Crews dubbed the "New Americanist" ideological criticism which has dominated nineteenth-century American literary studies for more than two decades.[26] And yet, because they sought to advance ambitious theses mastering key operations of an entire culture's discourse, some scholars influenced by Bercovitch have had to subordinate the particulars in the texts they study to another interest—their desire to provide a comprehensive explanation of a culture's pervasive ideology. Many of these studies have produced compelling, far-reaching, and revealing insights into American discourse practices. Yet such work often provides an abstract to the whole, rather than guideposts to concrete practices.

In contrast, during the very years that Bercovitch and other New Americanist critics were outlining America's overweening discourse of dissent as consent, the French historian, Michel de Certeau, along with other theorists such as Pierre Bourdieu, Gilles Deleuze, and Julia Kristeva, were considering how particular communities or speakers resisted becoming powerless victims of their culture's discursive ideology. There was room for play, innovation, and individuation within the formulaic systems of discourse, and it was scholars' jobs to seek out and find those spaces where minor groups

[26] Frederick Crews, "Whose American Renaissance?" in *The Critics Bear It Away: American Fiction and the Academy*, ed. Frederick Crews (New York: Random House, 1992), 16-46.

appropriated and used unconventionally the discourses that they had inherited. In particular, de Certeau powerfully demonstrated that the study of religious speech could open up questions about how minor communities responded to the social and political power shifts accompanying the rise of enlightenment rationalism. His studies in *The Mystic Fable* (1982) and *The Possession at Loudun* (1970), combined with his historiographical arguments in *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1974), *Heterologies* (1986), and *The Writing of History* (1988) about studying minor discourses—those emerging or dying out in the shadow of political or cultural change—have prompted a number of historians and literary scholars to return their attention to the social power of religious speech. These scholars have attended to how communities use and respond to the discourses, institutions, and practices that attempt to control them. While de Certeau has focused on Catholic, European religious communities, his influence has also sparked work on Protestant communities in both European and American contexts.[27]

De Certeau drew much of his own inspiration from rhetoric scholars who work on social practices. Scholars of rhetoric have long considered how language functions socially and politically and have also maintained that a discourse's *users* are always able,

[27] See, in particular, the articles contributed by Julia Kristeva and Luce Irigaray to a museum catalogue on mystical art: Irigaray, "Le Voie du féminin," in *Le Jardin clos de l'âme*, ed. Paul Vandenbroeck (Brussels: Société des Expositions, Palais des Beaus-Arts de Bruxelles, 1994), 155-64; and Kristeva, "Le Bonheur des beguines" in *Le Jardin clos de l'âme*. Related work, but from a different angle, has appeared on Quakers in the United States. See especially Frank Lambert, *Inventing the 'Great Awakening'* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1999); Rebecca Larson, *Daughters of Light: Quaker Women Preaching and Prophesying in the Colonies and Abroad, 1700-1775* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999); and Julie Sievers, "Awakening the Inner Light: Elizabeth Ashbridge and the Transformation of Quaker Community," *Early American Literature* 36 (2001): 235-62. On German-language Pietists, see Katherine Arens, "Dreams, Visions, and Cosmology: Swedenborg and the Protestant Reformation in Science," in *The Dream and the Enlightenment*, ed. Bernard Dieterle and Manfred Engel (Paris: Honore Champion, 2003), 135-67; and Lucinda Martin, "Female Reformers as the Gatekeepers of Pietism: The Example of Johanna Eleonora Merlau and William Penn," *Monatshefte* 95 (2003): 33-58.

to some degree, to modify for social and political ends the speech practices and discursive structures they inherit. Considering the lateness of rhetoric's resurgence as a major discipline in the modern academy and the intensity of its struggles to procure institutional respect and support, it is perhaps not surprising that a relatively small number of rhetoricians have found time to study religious speech. Recently in the U.S., however, historians of rhetoric have consistently begun to note the role of religion in the history of rhetorical training and of women's rhetoric, focusing on such examples as the nineteenth-century Quaker sisters Grimski or the medieval mystic Cristine de Pisan.[28] More recently, as scholars research the history of African- and Native-American rhetoric, many have grown increasingly attuned to the powerful role played by religion in authorizing and strategizing public speech by minorities.

With more or less awareness, scholars that treat texts as rhetoric (or as entailing attendant social practices) have much in common with those involved in the projects known variously as the history of the book, *histoire du livre*, and bibliographical studies, a group partly organized in the U.S. into the professional organization of the *Society for the History of Authors, Readers, and Publics*.[29] Often without ever referencing one

[28] This interest is only growing. At the 2000 Rhetoric Society of America convention, Patricia Bizzell—one of the most well-known scholars in the field of rhetorical studies and co-editor of the standard anthology for the history of rhetoric—participated in a panel with me on women religious rhetors of the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries. Recent gatherings of the Conference on College Composition and Communication have also featured multiple strong and well-attended panels on the history of religious rhetoric and rhetors.

[29] See, in particular, D. F. McKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts* (London: The British Library, 1986), Roger Chartier, *The Order of Books: Readers, Authors, and Libraries in Europe between the Fourteenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994); Anthony Grafton, *The Footnote: A Curious History* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997); William Charvat, *The Profession of Authorship in America, 1800-1870* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992); and Robert Darnton, *The Forbidden Best-Sellers of Pre-Revolutionary France* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1996).

another's work, rhetoric scholars and historians of the book have been inquiring into authors, editors, printers, publishers, distributors, and booksellers, as well as readers and "public spheres" for some time, rather than focusing exclusively on the text as an object abstracted from history. Turning attention to the producers and users of texts, and seeing authors as one limited part of a much larger system of textual production and consumption, provides some of the important details for answering the kinds of questions posed by de Certeau and historians of rhetoric.

Historians like de Certeau, rhetoric scholars, and bibliography and textual studies scholars also may find themselves working in parallel with literature scholars. Certainly, literary scholarship as a whole has, for some time now, paid little attention to religion, even as the Bible remains the best-selling book in the U.S. The trend has produced more than a few gaps in the scholarship. While scholars of nineteenth-century American literature have recognized, for example, that the cultural influence of Lucretia Mott's Quaker-based feminism or the sentimental Christian abolitionism of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* deserve study, contemporary literature students often remain shy of scholarship on religious topics. And yet early Americanists have recently found in religious studies a rich site for uncovering the histories and voices of minorities and common people. In the second edition (2003) of her influential work, *Under the Cope of Heaven* (1st ed. 1986), Patricia Bonomi outlines an "awakening" by both historians and literary scholars to religious groups in America. These scholars' recent studies, which have "reached beyond Puritan New England to the Middle Colonies and the South . . . refocused attention on the religious lives of African Americans, Native Americans, and

women . . . [and begun] to place their work in the larger context of communities in Europe, Africa, and the Caribbean," have shown how studies of Moravians, Quakers, Baptists, Methodists, Catholics, Jews, Christian Indians, Freemasons and others can crack open hidden veins in American history.[30] A growing, if still small, number of literature scholars have participated in these new directions, discovering how religion could bring to voice and agency speakers who otherwise would have struggled for authority.[31] Because these scholars have begun to treat religion in its full social, political, and material dimensions (not merely as a set of beliefs) across a broad range of racial, class, and gender categories, they have at once shaken loose older, calcified notions of religion and provided key new insights into culture.

What all of the approaches discussed here have in common, most generally, is a commitment to a historically-situated framework of analysis, which I rely on in my argument. What has come to be known in the U.S. as the "new historicism" is sure to be evoked by my use of the term "representation," a word given much of its critical tenor by Stephen Greenblatt's work and his former editing of the journal, *Representations*. And yet, as the scholarly groups just mentioned amply demonstrate, the various "new" historicisms come in a variety of stripes, many of which operate differently from

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[30] Patricia Bonomi, *Under the Cope of Heaven: Religion, Society, and Politics in Colonial America,* upd. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 3.

[31] See, notably, the work of Joanna Brooks in *"Face Zion Forward": First Writers of the Black Atlantic, 1785-1798* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2002) and *American Lazarus: Religion and the Rise of African-American and Native American Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); Michele Lise Tarter, "Quaking in the Light: The Politics of Quaker Women's Corporeal Prophecy in the Seventeenth-Century Transatlantic World," in *A Centre of Wonders: The Body in Early America,* ed. Janet Moore Lindman and Michele Lise Tarter (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 145-62*;* and Frank Lambert, *"Pedlar in Divinity": George Whitefield and the Transatlantic Revivals* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

Greenblatt's early monarchical focus or his contested use of the representative anecdote. All, however, retain a commitment to studying texts in the contexts of their actors and larger historical actions, and to breaking down the distinctions between engaged rhetoric and masterful literary art. In its inclusion of both "literary" and non-literary texts, treated in roughly the same way, this study implicitly draws from both Greenblatt as well as Annabel Patterson, Natalie Zemon Davis, Lynn Hunt, and others who have argued for studying these categories of texts as participating in the same cultural discourses and social arenas—for recognizing the practical roles of so-called literary texts and the rhetorical structures of so-called non-literary texts. In its concern with the "work" and careers of texts in the world, rather than with more purely aesthetic concerns, it echoes the work of Jane Tompkins and Nina Baym, as well as of such diverse scholars as Deleuze and Guattari and Anthony Grafton, who have been interested in how groups and individuals exercise agency through language and writing. In its recognition of "discursive formations" and "discourse" as a matrix of historical forces, it echoes Foucault, while its interest in non-major groups tactically maneuvering within language games reflects the literary-historical concerns of Pierre Bourdieu and J. G. A. Pocock.

Equipped with these tools, this study is able to encounter and revise the recent work on the connections between imperialism, the Reformation, and discourses of knowledge. The religious wonders at the center of this study—as I demonstrate at length—were instances of personal religious experience but also came to form a central component of the period's shared and changing intellectual discourse and, even more importantly, colonists' strategic political discourse.

Chapter 1: The Order of Documents

> I then bent myself to come to New England, thinking that I should be more free here than there from temptations. . . . My father and mother showed themselves unwilling. I sat close by a table where there lay a Bible. I hastily took up the Bible, and told my father [that] if, where I opened the Bible, there I met with anything either to encourage or discourage, that should settle me. I opening of it, not knowing no more than the child in the womb, the first [line] I cast my eyes on was: "Come out from among them, touch no unclean thing, and I will be your God and you shall be my people." My father and mother never more opposed me, but furthered me in the thing, and hastened after me as soon as they could.
>
> —John Dane, "A Declaration of Remarkable Providences in the Course of My Life," 1670s or early 1680s

In their details and plot lines, New England wonder writings provide clues to the period's historical landscape as seen from a participant's point of view—a ground-level perspective we must attempt in order to scan the horizons of their uses. We can recognize a few landmarks immediately. Their authors and editors, dissenting and largely middling-rank Protestants, appear in these pages without reference to the nobility, the crown or his agents, or Parliament. Here the journeyman, merchant's wife, and clergyman live unto themselves—a situation without precedent in English history. Indeed, they appear as the stories' key actors. They were a people who acquired within the colonies a remarkable degree of autonomy and prominence usually reserved for individuals of higher ranks. Wondrous reports also feature the wild waters of the Atlantic Ocean, the thick forests of New England, the fearsome lightning storms and strange American monsters in the very land where, as some conceived it, the sun went down. America was still "new" and mysterious to English and Europeans, and settling there meant participating in an often

violent imperial experiment which England and other European countries had not yet quite learned how to manage, or even how to justify. The writings manifest these uncertain new situations directly in their subjects, such as the trials of colonists' Atlantic crossings, their devastating war against the Indians in 1675-76, and the colonial leaders' lethal struggles against those who would challenge their newfound authority, such as Quakers or "antinomians." More than just an American flavor added to the traditional characters, themes, and formulas of European wonder genres, the colonial context contained degrees of "strange"-ness never before seen, without the overarching structure of stability and familiarity from within which European writers had traditionally, and often longingly, written about unusual and preternatural phenomena.

This structuring context is often missing from examinations of western wonder writings. It proves particularly crucial for New England. Examining it will enable us to begin to surmise the connections between when and where these writings were produced, and what they might have meant for those who wrote and read them. The New England colonies, while granted a far greater degree of independence than Spanish or French settlements, still had to negotiate often delicate relations with the crown in order to maintain their relative political autonomy. More broadly, to maintain credibility as both colonizers and Protestants, they also had to manage their international public identity. Both tasks required, in addition to statesmanship, the production and management of carefully balanced public representations of themselves as a community of subjects, religionists, intellectuals, and settlers. While many reports and communications about the New England colonies presented them in a questionable light, writings about wonders, I

argue, provided a powerful corrective. To understand how, we must more fully consider what such writings set out to remedy.

This chapter thus begins by providing an overview of the broader period under study, focusing on the state of dissenting Protestantism in Europe and England in connection with the social and political forces leading to American colonization by Englishmen and women. Understanding this history highlights two key issues that, in the eyes of early modern political leaders, influenced colonial identity representations during the seventeenth century: first, how Protestant sects were associated with schism and the political upheaval of seventeenth-century religious wars, and were therefore mistrusted; and second, how migrants to the English colonies were viewed at home as being society's superfluous refuse while also representatives abroad in the international contest to establish overseas empires. In such a context, colonial leaders would have needed to present themselves as a coherent community not suffering from the social ills that plagued early Virginia. In fact, they would have had to present themselves as the embodiment of England's highest ideals, though not as a group so zealous about these ideals as to further splinter England. Their presentation would have to suggest their competent self-government as an entity largely independent of English supervision, yet would also need to show their adherence to English imperial policy.

After reviewing these broad requirements, this chapter examines one particularly informative example of the problems that endangered colonists' tenuous identity constructions in the emerging Atlantic world: the widely read publications about King Philip's War (1675-76) that portrayed New England colonists and local native groups in a

vicious conflict, one that present-day historians estimate to have been the most lethal, per capita, in American history. From these documents, we gain a more particular sense of how some colonial publications could undermine the colonists' identity as legitimate colonizers and as model Protestants. We also discern some of the tools colonists used to legitimize their actions within imperial contexts not clearly defined by traditional authority—a topic pursued further in chapter two. In this way, the war publications help begin to establish the larger "order of documents" framing English colonization in New England. This order makes clear the identity politics—and attendant consequences—at stake in texts designed as broadly public speech (rather than as individual or local commentaries) about the colonies, even in narrative and reportage genres such as war accounts.[1]

Religious and Colonial Identities in the Seventeenth-Century Atlantic World

> This carriage of his in renouncing the Church upon such an occasion, and with them all the churches in the Countrey, and the spreading of his Leaven to sundry that resorted to him; this gave the Magistrates the more cause to observe the heady unrulelinesse of his spirit, and the incorrigiblenesse thereof by any Church-way, all the Churches in the

[1] I am drawing from Roger Chartier's notion of an "order of books," which rejects a view of publications as abstract "texts" existing in a pure realm of words. Instead, he attempts "to consider . . . that all works are anchored in the practices and the institutions of the social world" [Chartier, *The Order of Books*]. His term encompasses the ways in which an individual book attempts to organize its readers' reception of it by "installing an order . . . in which it is deciphered . . . in which it is to be understood . . . or the order intended by the authority who commanded or permitted the work." The term also refers to the material practices of production, communication, and reception that order how books circulate at any given historical moment. Finally, for him this order also includes the relationship between cultural productions like books and the "ordinary, banal practices that express the way in which a community—on any scale—experiences and conceives of its relationship with the world, with others, and with itself" (vii-ix). Although I will be paying close attention to the actual words in the documents here examined, my larger goal is to examine their ordering work at all three of Chartier's levels.

> Countrey being then renounced by him. And this was the other occasion which hastened the Sentence of his Banishment.
>
> —John Cotton, *A Reply to Mr. VVilliams his Examination*, 1647

> Seeing there is neither preferment nor employment for all within the lists of our countrey, we might iustly be accounted as in former times, both impudent and improuident, if we will yet sit with our armes foulded in our bosomes, and not rather soeke after such aduentures whereby the glory of God may be aduanced, the territories of our kingdome inlarged, our people both preferred and employed abroad, our wants supplyed at home, his Maiesties customes wonderfully augmented, and the honour and renown of our Nation spred and propagated to the ends of the world.
>
> —Robert Gray, *A Good Speed to Virginia*, 1609

New England colonials juggled two sets of political identities during the seventeenth century. [2] Their relationship to other dissenting Protestant movements in England and Europe formed one part of their group identity, while their fit as

[2] For the defining discussions of identity in seventeenth-century British Atlantic colonies, see especially Rebecca Ann Bach, *Colonial Transformations: The Cultural Production of the New Atlantic World, 1580-1640* (New York: Palgrave, 2000); Nicholas Canny and Anthony Pagden, eds., *Colonial Identity in the Atlantic World, 1500-1800* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton UP, 1987); Joyce E. Chaplin, *Subject Matter: Technology, the Body, and Science on the Anglo-American Frontier, 1500-1676* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001); Tony Claydon and Ian McBride, eds., *Protestantism and National Identity: Britain and Ireland, c.1650-c.1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992); and Colin Kidd, *British Identities before Nationalism: Ethnicity and Nationhood in the Atlantic World, 1600-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). I also address the scholarship focusing on identity formation and representations in seventeenth-century New England, particularly John Canup, *Out of the Wilderness: The Emergence of an American Identity in Colonial New England* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1990); Joseph A. Conforti, *Imagining New England: Explorations of Regional Identity from the Pilgrims to the Mid-Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Jack P. Greene, *Imperatives, Behaviors, and Identities: Essays in Early American Cultural History* (Charlottesvlle: University Press of Virginia, 1992); Jill Lepore, *The Name of War: King Philip's War and the Origins of American Identity* (New York: Knopf, 1998); and Ann M. Little, "Shoot That Rogue, for He Hath an Englishman's Coat On!": Cultural Cross-Dressing on the New England Frontier, 1620-1760," *New England Quarterly* 74 (2001), 238-73. Finally, I take up several of the major theoretical discussions of identity formation, particularly Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism,* 2nd ed. (London: Verso, 1991); and Carla Mulford's correction to Anderson, "Benjamin Franklin and the Myths of Nationhood," in A. Robert Lee and V. M. Verhoeven, eds., *Making America / Making American Literature: Franklin to Cooper* (Atlanta: Rodopi, 1996).

representatives of a particular, politically significant region within the transnational imperial map formed another. Yet Protestant sects and English colonists were groups with distinct histories, goals, and reputations. Each identity carried its own troubling history and its own disputes about legitimacy, and each held potential drawbacks and benefits, as we will see. Managing the play between the two was to prove important, especially in an era when the colonists' legitimacy as a colony—and thus their actual autonomy—remained tenuous. For New England colonists, therefore, identity politics could be more complicated than might initially appear. The socially radical and politically divisive legacy of dissenting Protestantism was to prove a burden for the colonists as they attempted to establish themselves as a legitimate, if independent, extension of England's realm; at the same time, the poor reputation of the Virginia colony challenged them to demonstrate that they could govern themselves without strong oversight by the crown or Parliament. And yet both aspects of their identity also provided them with goals and resources that would shape their settlement and, more importantly for our purposes, their writings about it.

Although more than a hundred years after the Reformation's traditionally defined beginnings in 1517, the period considered here—from the mid-seventeenth through the early eighteenth centuries—saw its adherents make their most intense attempts to work out its revolutions practically, and thus to transform traditions of church practice, community governance, and social status. For English history, the most well-known of these events include the eruption of civil war in 1642; the beheading of Charles I in 1648; Charles II's restoration in 1660; the so-called "Glorious" Revolution of 1688, when the

Catholic James II was quietly replaced with the Protestant William and Mary of Orange; and the 1689 Act of Tolerance that legally ended Protestants' attempts to establish a coherent reformed church-state institution. This final event ended dissenters' hopes for full reform of church and state based on Protestant ideals. Because the Glorious Revolution admitted the existence of more than a single legitimate church, it eliminated the possibility for creating a united reformed church-state, while it allowed the Anglican church to maintain control of the state's coffers and power hierarchy.[3]

Yet these headline events do not tell the full story of religious upheaval in England, let alone Europe. That richer story must take into account the scores of Protestant groups who all interpreted the Reformation in slightly different ways and sought with fervor to set up living communities to embody their ideals. They attempted not only to realize their own beliefs, but also to serve as models for their state, community, or nation as these polities organized themselves on new models. It was thus never merely a matter of Puritans, Anglicans, and Catholics when arguments about religious legitimacy arose. In England alone there were also Freewillers, Brownists, Baptists, Independents, and Quakers. Scotland had its Presbyterians. In the German-speaking regions there were Pietists, Hutterites (or United Brethren, also known as Moravians), and Lutherans; in Swizterland, Calvinists and Anabaptists; in the

[3] See Ole Peter Grell, Jonathan I. Israel, and Nicholas Tyacke, eds., *From Persecution to Toleration: The Glorious Revolution and Religion in England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

Netherlands, Dutch Arminian Remonstrants and Labadists; in France, Huguenots and Inspirationalists; in Hungary, more Calvinists; and the varieties multiplied on.[4]

The connections between these groups were complex and, as only a few scholars have recognized, transcended national boundaries. The Germanist scholar Lucinda Martin, for example, has recently demonstrated how the Pietist leader Johanna Eleonora Merlau Peterson corresponded with the Quaker leader William Penn, both exchanging ideas and meeting on several occasions. Their interaction influenced the future directions of these two leaders and their movements. "As but one example of many such international contacts," argues Martin, "the Merlau-Penn correspondence demonstrates . . . that Pietism was the specifically German manifestation of a pan-religious reform movement sweeping the continent and even extending its reach into the American colonies. . . . There was . . . a rich exchange between reform-minded parties all over the continent."[5] More broadly, historian J.G.A. Pocock has argued that this rich climate of exchange eventually fueled the ideas and social goals of multiple eighteenth-century "Enlightenments" (in opposition to the notion of a singular unified phenomenon known as "*the* Enlightenment"), which included movements issuing out of, instead of in strict

[4] On developments in British and Irish Protestantism before James I, see Felicity Heal, *Reformation in Britain and Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), esp 330-485; for developments after the 1688 Glorious Revolution, see E. Gordon Rupp, *Religion in England, 1688-1791* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986); and for the period in between, see Rufus Jones, *Spiritual Reformers in the 16th and 17th Centuries* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1914). On Scottish groups in particular, see Margo Todd, *The Culture of Protestantism in Early Modern Scotland* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002). For continental developments in Calvinist communities, see Philip Benedict, *Christ's Churches Purely Reformed: A Social History of Calvinism* (Yale: Yale Univeristy Press, 2002). For a broader overview of the Reformation's diverse products, see George Hunston Williams, *The Radical Reformation* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962). For an overview of religious groups around the "British Atlantic World," see Carla Gardina Pestana, "Religion," in *The British Atlantic World, 1500-1800* , ed. David Armitage & Michael J. Braddick (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 69-92.

[5] Lucinda Martin, "Female Reformers as the Gatekeepers of Pietism," 33; and "Women's Religious Speech and Activism in German Pietism," Diss. University of Texas at Austin, 2002.

opposition to, seventeenth-century religious and theological conflicts. Even within groups labeled "Huguenot," "Puritan" or even "Arminian," leading figures were closely engaged with the erudition and purposes of other groups, in turn spreading their ideas on to others.[6] Rather than discrete clusters of well-defined religious groups, the period was thus defined by cross-pollination amongst these groups as well as competition between them to lead the way to new reforms.

The proliferation of religious sects and models was at once root and consequence of the period's social and political unrest. The wars of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, including the Eighty Years' War between Spain and the Netherlands (1568-1648), the Thirty Years' War (primarily between the Holy Roman Empire and Habsburg but involving nearly all of Europe, including Bohemia, Austria, Denmark, Sweden, Poland, Russia, France, Spain, and the Netherlands from 1618 to 1648), and the English Civil Wars (1642-51), had been brought about partially by the splintering of the Roman Catholic church and Holy Roman Empire in the wake of the Reformation. All were fought in the name of religion. In turn, the period's violence and upheavals prompted many to reject traditional political and social models, and to seek out new ones—radical responses to violent times. Thus, many of these Protestant groups were as distinctive for their social ideals as for their theological notions. Quakers (the Society of Friends), for example, took seriously the notion of the Holy Spirit's indwelling presence in *all* persons with saving faith (an idea espoused by all Protestants to some degree). They also hearkened to the words of Paul, when he wrote in Galatians 3:28 that "There is neither

[6] J. G. A. Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion, Volume One: The Enlightenments of Edward Gibbon, 1737-1764* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for all are one in Christ Jesus." From these starting points, they (at least theoretically) rejected traditional gender norms, refused to acknowledge class hierarchies, abolished the distinction between clergy and laity within their own group, and denounced the institution of slavery.

Other branches of Protestantism made similar social reforms. In the Pietist community of Halle, for example, unemployed journeymen worked alongside members of the lower nobility.[7] Even the famously repressive Massachusetts Bay Puritans experimented with dispersions of social power. Besides their bottom-up ecclesiastical structure, in which local congregations rather than a hierarchical church had the power to call the clergy, they initially encouraged attendance in lay-led (and even women-led) study groups[8] and founded the church's validity on its members' individual experiences of faith, rather than on the authority of its leaders or strictness of the church's discipline.[9]

The seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries were thus periods of unprecedented religious (and, as a result, social) experimentation, but the period was far from being one of religious and social *freedom*. In England, the German language

[7] Martin, "Women's Religious Speech," 63-79.

[8] It was the Antinomian Controversy (1636-38) and its infamous "American Jezebel," Anne Hutchinson, that convinced New England leaders to discourage the study groups and prohibit women from leading them. The most recent nuanced study of the controversy is Michael P. Winship, *Making Heretics: Militant Protestantism and Free Grace in Massachusetts, 1636-1641* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 2002).

[9] On the relative weight in New England of individual spiritual experiences versus church discipline in marking a true church, see Winship, *Making Heretics*; Michael G. Ditmore's "A Prophetess in Her Own Country: An Exegesis of Anne Hutchinson's 'Immediate Revelation,'" *William and Mary Quarterly* 57 (2000): 349-92; Janice Knight, *Orthodoxies in Massachusetts: Rereading American Puritanism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994); and my article on John Cotton and the Antinomian Controversy, "Re-figuring the Song of Songs: John Cotton's 1655 Sermon and the Antinomian Controversy," *New England Quarterly* 76 (2003): 73-107.

regions, the Netherlands, and elsewhere, these experimental groups—as well as the splintering sectarianism they fueled—were often seen by local leaders as threats to the social order. The Leveler movement in England (1646-49), for example, explicitly agitated for political reform in the direction of individual liberties and self-government, arguments partly drawn from their egalitarian religious principles. The movement, however, was quickly crushed by Oliver Cromwell. More broadly, historians debate the degree to which the rapid proliferation of radical groups such as the Levelers, Quakers, Diggers, Fifth Monarchists, Muggletonians, and Ranters during Cromwell's rule contributed to the 1660 Restoration of the monarchy. Whatever else, as Thomas Munck notes, "the [Quaker] movement served as a reminder of what might have been."[10] In continental Europe, the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia, which concluded the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648), actually prohibited the formation of new "sects." The provision was seen as one way to effectively end the devastating and religiously-fueled warfare.[11] Thus, when John Cotton in New England declared that Roger Williams' sectarian religious views were "held to be the more dangerous, because [they] tended to unsettle all the Kingdomes, and Common-wealths in Europe," his was not an unusual viewpoint.[12] Groups like the Massachusetts Bay Protestants were eager to demonstrate that they were not the sectarian, rabble-rousing sort, and that they did not tolerate such stirrings in their midst. They banished Williams, infamously, in the winter of 1635.

[10] Thomas Munck, "Society," in *The Seventeenth Century: Europe 1598-1715*, ed. Joseph Bergin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 77.

[11] Martin, "Women's Religious Speech," 33-34.

[12] John Cotton, "A Reply to Mr. VVilliams his Examination; And Answer of the letters sent to him by John Cotton" published with *The Bloudy Tenent Washed* (London, 1647), 29.

If religious sects were seen as liable to create social and political unrest during the period, so too were colonists who emigrated to European possessions in the Americas. While the French Huguenots were fleeing to Prussia from Louis XIV and the Mennonites were finding homes in the Netherlands, migrants were pouring by the thousands out of London into the Atlantic. Alison Games estimates that in 1635 alone, 7,507 passengers and soldiers disembarked from the port of London (a number comprising "somewhere between 2.1 and 2.5 percent of London's total population") to thirteen destinations in the Atlantic, including the Puritan-populated or Puritan-organized island colonies of Providence and Henrietta off the Mosquito Coast on the western rim of the Caribbean, Tortuga off the northern coast of modern-day Haiti, and Bermuda, as well as Barbados, Nevis, Antigua, and St. Kitts in the eastern Caribbean.[13] English colonists also sailed to the mainland American colonies of Virginia and Maryland, while dissenting English Protestants made their way in large numbers to the colonies of Massachusetts, Plymouth, and Connecticut.

Virginia, especially the Jamestown settlement, has often been taken as the chief example of how colonization schemes fed upon social problems in England, and thus how colonists were associated with social ills. Advertising Jamestown's ability to siphon

[13] Alison Games, *Migration and the Origins of the English Atlantic World* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999), 1. For an overview of seventeenth-century migration, see the essays in Nicholas Canny, ed., *Europeans on the Move: Studies on European Migration, 1500-1800* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994). On non-English religious migrants, see Jon Butler, *The Huguenots in America: A Refugee People in a New World Society* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983); Hartmut Lehman et al., eds., *In Search of Peace and Prosperity: New German Settlements in Eighteenth-Century Europe and America* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), esp. part IV; and Henry Méchoulan and Gerard Nahon, 'Introduction', *Menasseh Ben Israel: The Hope of Israel*, trans. Richenda George (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987). For a discussion of the ways in which colonists often migrated from one colony to another, see April Lee Hatfield's chapter on "Intercolonial Migration" in *Atlantic Virginia: Intercolonial Relations in the Seventeenth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 86-109.

off excess population from a teeming England, Virginia's promoters took in orphans and landless gentry. "The Citie of London," reported Sir Edwin Sandys in the Virginia Company's records, "have by Act of their Common Counsell, appointed one Hundred Children out of their superfluous multitude to be transported to Virginia; there to be bound apprentices for certaine yeares."[14] Virginia was also a place to send "superfluous" adults, as Richard Hakluyt argued[15]—adults whom one colonial governor called "wylde menn of myne owene nacione, whose vnrulynes ys such as not to gyve leasure to yhe gardes to bee all most att eny tyme from them."[16] Between the unwanted children, the unruly adults, and the unemployed sons of the gentry, Virginia seemed to offer a solution to several intractable economic problems. "There is nothing more dangerous for the estate of common-wealths," wrote Englishman Robert Gray, "then when the people do increase to a greater multitude and number then may iustly parallel with the largenesse of the place and countrey: for hereupon comes oppression, and diuerse kinde of wrongs, mutinies, sedition, commotion, rebellion, scarcitie, dearth, pouertie, and sundrie sorts of calamities, which either breed the conversion, or eversion, of cities and common-wealths."[17] As historian Anthony Pagden has noted, "all the European powers seem to have regarded their overseas settlements as either simple deposits for the waste products

[14] Sir Edwin Sandys to Sir Robert Naunton on January 28, 1619 (Julian dating), as quoted in Rebecca Ann Bach, *Colonial Transformations: The Cultural Production of the New Atlantic World, 1580-1640* (New York: Palgrave, 2000), 20.

[15] Preface to *Divers Voyages* in Richard Hakluyt, *The Original Writings and Correspondence of the Two Richard Hakluyts*, ed. E. G. R. Taylor, 2 vols. (London: Hakluyt Society, 1935), I, 176.

[16] Ralph Lane to Sir Philip Sidney, August 12, 1585, as quoted in Rebecca Ann Bach, *Colonial Transformations: The Cultural Production of the New Atlantic World, 1580-1640* (New York: Palgrave, 2000), 9-10.

[17] Richard Gray, *A Good Speede to Virginia* (London, 1609).

of the metropolitan society or, more far-sightedly (and more humanely), as a place where the disadvantaged . . . could create lives for themselves which they would be denied in Europe."[18] This attitude extended to New England as well. A promoter of Plymouth colony urged his fellow English to consider that "the present consumption which groweth upon us here [in England], whilst the land groaneth under so many close-fisted and unmerciful men, being compared with the easiness, plainness, and plentifulness in living in those remote places, may quickly persuade any man to a liking of this course, and to practise a removal [to America]."[19]

As a result, if religious sects were seen as threats to the social order, so were migrants and the type of people who relocated to colonies. As Rebecca Bach has argued, reports and plays about the colonies by such prominent authors as Ben Johnson "respond to the rumors current in London that the [Virginia] settlement abounded with thieves and scoundrels . . . and that the 'wild' Indians and the settlers were becoming indistinguishable."[20]

Historical records, however, show that instead of orphans, criminals, and unemployed gentlemen, the settlers to New England primarily included artisans (such as carpenters, weavers, cutlers, tanners, and shoemakers), farmers, merchants, and professionals (largely clergy), and that most traveled in families, not as lone individuals. "Far from belonging to the poorer segments of English society," argues Virginia DeJohn

[18] Anthony Pagden, *Lords of All the World: Ideologies of Empire in Spain, Britain and France, c. 1500 - c. 1800* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 104.

[19] R. C., "Reasons and Considerations touching the lawfulnless of removing out of England into the parts of America," in *Mourt's Relation, or a Journal of the Plantation of Plymouth,* ed. Dwight B. Heath (1622; reprint, Bedford, M.A.: Applewood Books, 1963), 96.

[20] Bach, *Colonial Transformations,* 126.

Anderson, "most [New England] emigrants came from the relatively prosperous middling section."[21] In turn, they thrived in New England, even without strong leadership from the nobility or the crown. With a little help from the "sacred cod," as Perry Miller wryly noted, and Charles I's Navigation acts of 1651 and 1660, millers became traders, artisans became capitalists, and merchants became bankers: "As soon as God made clear the market value of the cod, pious citizens . . . bought up the fishing fleet, and by the end of the century . . . [New England merchants] succeeded the Dutch as the principal competitors of merchants in London and Bristol." By 1670, Boston could boast thirty merchants worth between ten and thirty thousand pounds. By 1685, Joshua Moodey could declare "that salvation yields a hundred per cent clear gain."[22]

While Virginia's governors struggled to control their orphans and wild young gentrymen, New Englanders' independence, growing success, and peculiar forms of government raised other concerns. After Charles II's restoration, contests arose between the colonists, who wished to retain local control, and the metropole, which sought to reign back its colonies into conformity with its policies. Complaints about the northern

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[21] Virginia DeJohn Anderson, *New England's Generation: The Great Migration and the Formation of Society and Culture in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 31.

[22] Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: From Colony to Province* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1953), 44-46. On economic developments in New England, see John J. McCusker and Russell R. Menard, *The Economy of British America, 1607*-1789 (Chapel Hill, N.C.: Published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture by the University of North Carolina Press, 1985). On the class make-up of New England, see T. H. Breen, *Puritans and Adventurers: Change and Persistence in Early America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980); Jack P. Greene, *Pursuits of Happiness: The Social Development of Early Modern British Colonies and the Formation of American Culture* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1988); David Grayson Allen, *In English Ways: The Movement of Societies and the Transferral of English Local Law and Custom to Massachusetts Bay in the Seventeenth Century* (Chapel Hill, N. C.: Published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Va., by the University of North Carolina Press, 1981); and Kenneth A. Lockridge, *A New England Town: The First Hundred Years. Dedham, Massachusetts, 1636-1736* (New York: Norton, 1985).

colonies were on the rise, and they provided an ample reason for the crown to crack down on the colonists. Not long after the Quaker George Bishop published in London his diatribe *New-England Judged, Not by Man's, but the Spirit of the Lord* in 1661, King Charles II demanded (in June of 1662) that Massachusetts admit into church communion any honest man or woman; allow the use of the Common Prayer; admit all men to citizenship, whether full members of a church or not, provided their estates were significant enough; and allow "all persons of good and honest lives . . . to the Sacrament."[23] By 1664, he had sent a royal commission to investigate whether these orders had been carried out, and a decade later, in 1676, Edward Randolph arrived in the colonies to initiate action against the Massachusetts charter.[24] Londoners could themselves read about some of these troubles in pamphlets like Bishop's or the 1682 short work of "J. W." entitled *A Letter from New-England.* Written from the viewpoint of a disgruntled colonist, the author aired a series of damning complaints against the colonies:

> I think it great reason that the King should make Inquiry into their Authority, when they live altogether as if they denied his, and impose

[23] June 28, Hampton Court, in *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, America and West Indies, 1661-1668* (vol. 5), ed. W. Noel Sainsbury (London, 1880), 93-94.

[24] On the colonies' legal and political battles with the crown, see Philip S. Haffenden, "The Crown and the Colonial Charters, 1675-1688," *William & Mary Quarterly* 3rd ser., 15 (1958), 297-311, 452-66; Michael G. Hall, *Edward Randolph and the American Colonies, 1676-1703* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1960); Jack P. Greene, *Peripheries and Center: Constitutional Development in the Extended Polities of the British Empire and the United States, 1607-1788* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986) and "Negotiated Authorities: The Problem of Governance in the Extended Polities of the Early Modern Atlantic World," in *Negotiated Authorities: Essays in Colonial Political and Constitutional History* (Charlottesville, VA.: University Press of Virginia, 1994); and Ian K. Steele, "The British Parliament and the Atlantic Colonies to 1760: New Approaches to Enduring Questions," in *Parliament and the Atlantic Empire*, ed. Philip Lawson (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press for the Parliamentary History Yearbook Trust, 1995).

> Arbitrary Laws on all Trafiques hither, without respect to their Fellow Subjects; and most certainly the King has good grounds to suspect their Obedience to him, when they live in such a continual course of Debauchery, that by their Actions one would think they were Atheists, and as exempt from the Superintendency of God, as they fancy themselves unaccountable to any Power, by being a Constitution within themselves.[25]

In a maneuver that integrates images of antinomian religious radicalism with Virginia-style debauchery, the author sets forth the colonists' identity as direly needing metropolitan correction.

Contests between the colonists and the crown intensified over economic interests—especially commercial "trafiques"—as the colonists sought to enjoy the profits of their labor, rather than feed them back into the mother country. At the same time, they worked to retain the crown's interest in them as valuable investments. By 1677, the colonies' failure to comply fully by the Navigation Acts was bringing them under increasing censure.[26] In New England, such contests visibly surfaced in 1664 when the king's commissioners declared the pan-colony alliance, the "United Colonies of New England," to be an illegal organization, and challenged colonial leaders' aggressive annexation of Indian lands to their own "possessions."[27]

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[25] J. W., *A Letter from New-England Concerning their Customs, Manners, and Religion. Written upon occasion of a Report about a Quo Warranto Brought against that Government* (London, 1682).

[26] Miller, *Colony to Province*, 138.

[27] Francis Jennings, *The Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest* (New York: Norton and Company, 1976), 282-97.

Thus New England Protestants found themselves at the center of these various tensions in their public identity: at once English subjects and yet dissenters against the Anglican church; at once part of a migration often considered to be the unwanted effluance of a failing class structure and yet now a self-governing polity; at once the crown's agents against foreign rivals and yet rivals against the crown for that land themselves; at once the Indians' missionaries and their oppressors. Although their economic base grew steadily richer throughout the middle portion of the seventeenth century, its fragility was demonstrated in "King Philip's War" with nearby Indian groups. This conflict reduced the overall wealth of New England so drastically that colonists did not reclaim similar standing until after the American Revolution.[28] Similarly, while the colony's successful growth seemed to fortify its autonomy and power, this, too, proved fragile, as the crown's 1684 revocation of their charter demonstrated. Theirs was a position of unprecedented possibilities and also extreme risk.

Internal colonial politics only complicated these tensions about who the colonists were as a group and how they should represent themselves to the rest of the world. Over the years, disputes had arisen between the first and second generations of colonists, between the different (and often rival) New England colonies, and between the colonists and their native neighbors. In particular, as we will see in the example below, these conflicts had the larger effect of undermining the colonists' identity as a true embodiment of reformed Protestant community, especially as ugly divisions multiplied publicly amongst the colonists and the different colonies of Connecticut, Massachusetts Bay,

[28] Puglisi, *Puritans Besieged: The Legacies of King Philip's War;* and Webb, *1676: The End of American Independence,* 243.

Rhode Island, and Plymouth. Even more visibly, as America's native peoples began violently to challenge English encroachments, the colonists' identity as evangelists to the natives fell apart—a consequence which increased tensions with the crown since it endangered England's transnational reputation.[29]

And yet, aided by the wide distances of the Atlantic and by both Parliament's and Charles II's inconsistent attention to colonial affairs, these risks could be managed through a combination of limited concessions and strategic rhetoric. While the legal concessions have been studied by historians, many of the subtler, indirect rhetorical responses to the colonists' political situation have not.

Within this broad historical moment emerged a small but influential set of writings about wonders in America. The few scholars to have read them have generally assumed them to be out of sync with the mainstream intellectual currents in England and in Europe, and to have been motivated out of a last-ditch attempt to preserve traditional theology from the rising hegemony of what would later become scientific rationalism.[30] To read the texts carefully, however, is to see that the narratives were in line with—and sometimes at the cutting edge of—writings being published by the Royal Society's *Philosophical Transactions* (1660—) and the journal of Germany's equivalent scientific

[29] Perry Miller's account in *From Colony to Province* remains the single best overview of the colony's internal problems over these years, in spite of significant revisions to his theses by later historians. On the colonists evangelizing rhetoric, see Anthony Pagden, "Europe and the Wider World," in *The Seventeenth Century: Europe 1598-1715,* ed. Joseph Bergin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 209-15; Jill Lepore, *The Name of War: King Philip's War and the Origins of American Identity* (New York: Knopf, 1998), 21-47; and Laura J. Murray, "Joining Signs with Words: Missionaries, Metaphors, and the Massachusett Language," *New England Quarterly* 74 (2001): 62-93.

[30] James A. Levernier makes this argument in his introduction to Increase Mather's *An Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences* (Delmar, N. Y.: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 1977), v-xx; as does James Hartman in *Providence Tales and the Birth of American Literature.*

institute, the *Ephemeridum Medico-Physicarum Germanicarum* (1670—), as well as with major popular collections of wonder narratives published in England. While the content may have been similar, however, the stakes of publishing such reports were entirely different for New England colonials than for natural philosophers in England and Germany. One might wonder, as Perry Miller did, about the timing for Mather's wonder collection: he found it "incredible . . . that, at the moment Mather and his colleagues were engaged in a struggle for existence, they idly embarked upon a collection of curiosa!"[31] As later chapters will show, representations of wondrous life in the colony were far from idle. They took up the burden of the period's identity politics in a way that powerfully advanced the colonists' cause.

To gain a more particular sense of these stakes, it will help to look closely at one particular historical event in New England's early history and the publications that emerged from it. The writings considered below—reports of the first large war between New England colonists and Native American groups—reached significant state and popular audiences outside the colonies. The problems that plagued these reports, I argue, reveal important features of the English and European discourse about American colonization that colonials had to counter.

[31] Miller, *Colony to Province*, 143.

King Philip's War: The Documents

Against the colonists' wishes, Philip, or Metacom,[32] leader of an Indian alliance that resisted the colonies' growth and policies,[33] became a symbol of the settlers' state of affairs in 1675. In a muddy swamp on August 12, 1676, an English raid surprised Philip's camp near Plymouth and he was fatally shot. The colonists ordered that a native behead Philip, quarter him, and hang each section of his body from a tree, according to the English law regarding traitors against the crown. Parts of his body were taken away as trophies, including his hand, given to the Indian who had shot him. Just as Oliver Cromwell's head had been stuck on a pole atop Westminster Hall, so too was Philip's head hauled back to camp, paraded through the streets of Plymouth on August 17, skewered on a pike, and then planted in front of Plymouth colony, where it would remain for decades as a sign and warning for all to see.[34]

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[32] Scholars disagree about what to call this leader. Philip's Algonquian name was Metacom, and he only became "Philip" in 1660 when the Plymouth Court renamed him and his brother Wamsutta, who became "Alexander." Historian Jill Lepore argues that Metacom seems to have taken the name "Philip" in earnest, and that he was "raised in a culture in which people commonly adopted new names, leaving old names behind," especially after committing a significant deed or changing their social status. As a result, she argues, even if he gave up the name "Philip" during the war, "to mark a new stage in his life . .. surely he would not have returned to Metacom, the name of his youth." Moreover, she notes that "calling him 'Metacom' today is no truer to his memory, especially because 'Metacom' became a popular substitute for 'Philip' only in the nineteenth century, when white playwrights, poets, and novelists sought to make the war sound more authentically, and romantically, Indian." Lepore, *Name of War*, xx.

[33] Douglas Leach, *Flintlock and Tomahawk: New England in King Philip's War* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1958; reprint, East Orleans, Mass.: Parnassus Imprints, 1992) contains the most thorough account of the conflict. On the consequences of the war for the English colonists, see Michael J. Puglisi, *Puritans Beseiged: The Legacies of King Philip's War in the Massachusetts Bay Colony* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1991) and Stephen Saunders Webb, *1676: The End of American Independence* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984).

[34] This act is recorded variously by colonial authors. Notably, neither of the war's major historians—William Hubbard or Increase Mather—record it in detail. See instead Benjamin Church, *The Entertaining*

The sight of Philip's head on a spike, a shocking image meant to seal the fate of New England's Algonquian people as traitors to the English crown, contrasted sharply with the actual seal of the Massachusetts Bay Colony.[35] The seal had been designed to articulate the colony's publicly-stated purpose. The "Sigillum Gub Et Societ De Mattachusets Bay in Nova Anglia" features not an Englishman, but an Indian. He stands naked except for leaves covering his groin, and holds an arrow in one hand and a bow in the other. Facing the viewer, he speaks the words "Come Over and Help Us" scripted in a ribbon of text issuing from his mouth. This image of a Native American, entreating the English for help moving towards civilization and towards God, was thus made to express the logic of self-justification that had laid the ground of the colony's identity. In their 1622 tract, *The Discovery and Plantation of New England*, the Council of New England thanked Charles, then prince of England, for his "most fauourable encouragement . . . through which we haue the easier passage to aduance the Crosse of Christ in Heathen parts, and to display his banner in the head of his Armie against infernall spirits, which haue so long kept those poore distressed creatures (the inhabitants of those parts) in

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History of King Philip's War, which began in the Month of June, 1675. As Also of Expeditions More Lately Made Against the Common Enemy, and Indian Rebels, in the Eastern Parts of New-England (Boston, 1716; Newport, 1772); reprinted in *The History of Philip's War, Commonly Called the Great Indian War, of 1675 and 1676,* ed. Samuel G. Drake (Exeter, N.H.: J. & B. Williams, 1829), 120-26; and Cotton Mather, "Arma Virosque, Cano: *or, the* troubles *which the churches of* New England *have undergone in the* Wars, *which the people of that country have had with the* Indian *salvages"* in Book 7, *Magnalia Christi Americana* (London: 1702; reprint, 7 books in 2 vols., Hartford: Silas Andrus, 1820), 498-99. The incident is also retold in Lepore, *Name of War,* 173-75; Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1860*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1973), 169-70; and Eric B. Schultz and Michael J. Tougias, *King Philip's War: The History and Legacy of America's Forgotten Conflict* (Woodstock: Countryman Press, 1999), 289-90.

[35] The seal's first appearance is noted by Worthington Chauncy Ford in the Introductory Note to *Broadsides, Ballads &c. Printed in Massachusetts, 1639-1800* (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1922), vii.

bondage, whose posteritie will for euer blesse the time . . ."[36] Planting New England was ultimately all for the advancement of the "Crosse of Christ in Heathen parts"—at least on paper. Notably, the colony's seal was first widely printed in 1676—the year the war achieved its greatest international publicity and also the year of its bloody conclusion—by means of a woodcut produced by John Foster. Philip's severed head, however, testified to a conflicting story.[37]

The colonists had symbolically possessed, and then desecrated, Philip's body.[38] Their act at once silenced Philip, removing him from their narrative, while making his dismembered body articulate the colonists' new relationship to America's native peoples

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[36] *A briefe Relation of the Discoverie and Plantation of New-England: and of sundry Accidents therein occurring, from the yeere of our Lord 1607. To this present 1622* (1622; reprint, Amsterdam: Theatrum Orbis Terrarum, Ltd. and Walter J. Johnson, Inc., 1975).

[37] Missionary John Eliot appears to have been one of the few colonists outside Rhode Island working to Christianize the Indians, and a few historians have doubted even Eliot's commitment to the cause. Eliot accomplished an astounding amount of work with apparently very little aid from other religious leaders. In conjunction with Indian translators and printers, he produced translations of the Bible and of Protestant piety texts into the Massachusetts language. In 1655 he began with "A Primer or Catechism, in the Massachusetts Indian Language," and then between 1655 and 1658 published Genesis (1655), Matthew (1655), and "A Few Psalmes in Meeter" (1658)—all translated into Massachusetts. In 1661 he completed the New Testament and in 1663 completed the entire Holy Bible. He later published an "Indian Grammar," an "Indian Primer," a "Logick Primer" and re-issued the complete Holy Bible in 1685. He also wrote tracts promoting his work among New England Indians, such as the *Indian Dialogues* published in 1671. Although Eliot was not the only New Englander harassing the natives for religion's sake, he found few colleagues. In 1658, Abraham Pierson devised *Some helps for the Indians shewing them how to improve their natural reason, to know the true God, and the true Christian religion*, a publication that was "Undertaken at the motion, and published by the order of the Commissioners of the United Colonies" and was "Examined and approved by Thomas Stanton Interpreter-General to the United Colonies for the Indian language, and by some others of the most able Interpeters [sic] amogst [sic] us." But there appears to be little other evidence that many other colonists actively engaging in such missionary activities. Eliot's work was hardly among the colonies' top priorities. On missionary activities in New England, see Neal Salisbury, "'I Loved the Place of my Dwelling': Puritan Missionaries and Native Americans in Seventeenth-Century Southern New England," *Inequality in Early America* (Hanover, N. H.: Dartmouth College, University Press of New England, 1999), 111-33; Richard W. Cogley, *John Eliot's Mission to the Indians before King Philip's War* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999); and Salisbury, "Red Puritans: The 'Praying Indians' of Massachusetts Bay and John Eliot," *WMQ*, 3rd ser., 31 (1974): 27-54.

[38] For an extensive discussion of the political power in this kind of act, see Robert Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (New York: Basic Books, 1984).

and lands. In contrast to the seal, Philip's head spoke ambiguously, however. Did it represent the successful translation of English civil law into the American wilderness, since Philip, treated as a rebellious subject of the king, was successfully quelled and executed? Or did it demonstrate the violation of that law and the transgression of the colonial charters (and the colony's avowed ideal) since colonists had violently defaulted on their promise to "come over and help" the natives learn Christianity and English civilization? Perhaps more fundamentally, who emerged as savage, and who as civil in this new version of the colony's story?

In retaliation for attacks on Middleborough, Dartmouth, Plymouth, Mendon, Brookfield, Springfield, Hatfield, Northampton, Pawtuxet, Lancaster, Medfield, Groton, Longmeadow, Marlborough, Simsbury, Providence, and others, the English massacred Indians. Trapped women and children were burned to death in their wigwams and hundreds of Indian fighters were slaughtered in their beds. Thousands of Algonquians died in the fighting. Over the course of the 20 months of warfare, thousands more (including "friendly" Indians) died as captives, starved and froze to death in concentration camps, or were sold into slavery. Others were tortured and mutilated.[39] The colonists' treatment of Philip's body evoked this violence in a way that would have left the colonists' identity sullied by the blood of war.[40]

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[39] See William Hubbard, *A Narrative of the Troubles with the Indians in New England* (London, 1677); and Lepore, *The Name of War,* 3-18, 150-70.

[40] Lepore suggests that anxieties about such cultural blurrings were the chief issue at stake for the English in this war. "The principal cultural anxiety behind King Philip's war," she argues, "was confusion of identity." In turn, she argues that English writings about the war primarily attempted to re-establish stable and distinct identities for the two groups. "Here, then," she concludes, "was the solution to the colonists' dilemma between peacefully degenerating into barbarians or fighting like savages: wage the war, and win it, by whatever means necessary, and then write about it, to win it again." Lepore, *Name of War*, 11, 81.

This contrast between Philip's head and the Massachusetts Bay seal would have been problem enough for the colonists to explain. Two additional factors made the rhetorical work of representing themselves, their relationship to the native peoples of America, and their purpose as a colony, all the more difficult. One of these problems becomes clear upon reading the colonists' published writings about the war. The second only emerges when we set this public discourse in a larger European historical context.[41]

We can first see difficulties emerge for the colonists' public identity in their reports of the war, and specifically the differences and disagreements within these reports. After years of printing huge runs of bibles and devotional works for the Indians translated into the Massachusett language by missionary John Eliot and Indian scholars, the Cambridge Press switched gears in 1675, when the fighting broke out. In an attempt to find a way into a religiously, socially, and politically acceptable script for such questionable acts, colonists turned the presses in New England and London to printing narratives, sermons, and poems about their attempts to annihilate the Indians. And they did so in earnest. [42] Even for print-loving Protestants, the published output about the war was profuse. In 1675, for example, London presses published four lengthy letters containing reports of the wars. Several more narratives were known to have circulated

[41] In addition to Lepore, major accounts of King Philip's War can be found in Douglas Leach, *Flintlock and Tomahawk;* Francis Jennings, *The Invasion of America,* esp. 298-326; and Alden T. Vaughn, *New England Frontier: Puritans and Indians, 1620-1675* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1695; rev. ed., 1979), 309-38.

[42] Among the few scholars to study these texts, historian Jill Lepore and literary scholar Richard Slotkin have most extensively discussed the rhetorical work attempted by these publications. See Jill Lepore, *The Name of War;* Richard Slotkin and James K. Folsom, eds., *So Dreadfull a Judgment: Puritan Responses to King Philip's War, 1676-1677* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1978), 3-45; and Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence.* In addition to her persuasive arguments about the role of language, literacy, and cultural meanings in King Philip's War, Lepore includes a complete bibliography of the war writings, 50-51.

within the colonies, although their publication histories remain unknown. In Cambridge, the Massachusetts Council published a broadside declaring the justness of the war and their intent that the United Colonies "prosecute" it jointly.

By the fall of 1676, warring had mostly ended, but literary production had just begun. In this year, Increase Mather published his *Brief History of the War* in both Boston and London, the Boston edition of which was also accompanied by a sermon on the subject. In this year also, the Rhode Island Quaker John Easton circulated and possibly published his controversial "Relacion of the Indyan Warre," which criticized the actions of Plymouth Colony and the other colonies, and also helped prompt an angry Increase Mather to write his corrective version of events. Nathaniel Saltonstall's sensational and bloody epistolary reports appeared in London. Benjamin Tompson's epic poems about the war were published in Boston and London. Thomas Wheeler published a sermon in Cambridge. Edward Randolph, agent for the English crown newly arrived in New England to challenge its charter, wrote his own report which also criticized Massachusetts officials. Anonymous pamphleteers published *A True Account*, *A Farther Brief and True Narration*, and *News from New-England* in London.

The year 1677 continued the rhetorical output. Daniel Gookin, supervisor of the "praying towns" (of Christian Indians) and one of the few New England leaders to hold a more sympathetic view of the Indians, finished his "Historical Account of the Doings and Sufferings of the Christian Indians in New England" this year, although the work never found a willing publisher. This year also saw William Hubbard challenge Increase Mather for the role of chief chronicler of the war, publishing his *Narrative of the*

Troubles with the Indians in both London and Boston. Here he made his famous argument that one should not, like Mather, attempt to write a "history" of the "war," when "the Matter of Fact therein related (being rather Massacres, barbarous inhumane Outrages, than acts of Hostility, or valiant Atchievements) no more deserve the Name of a War than the Report of them the Title of an History."[43] "History" or no, information about the war remained saleable throughout this year. A London publisher printed another letter from New England, this one by Richard Hutchinson, relating *The Warre in New-England Visibly Ended*. Increase Mather, who could not let the matter rest, published two additional tracts: *A Relation of the Troubles which Have Hapned in New-England* and *An Historical Discourse*. Several years later, and under Mather's supervision, Mary Rowlandson's famous and pattern-setting captivity narrative, *The Sovereignty & Goodness of God* (1682), appeared in Boston, Cambridge, and also London, concluding the war-related flow of print.

As if mere quantity of output were not enough, repetition and recitation became common features of colonial writing about the war. Writers restated their colony's previous official, court-authored statements regarding the war—documents such as the colony's 1675 order to confine friendly Indians to several of the "praying towns," the 1675 treaty with the Narragansett Indians whom the English later attacked during the war, Philip's 1671 agreement to (re)submit himself to the English, and announcements of

[43] William Hubbard, "An Advertisement to the Reader," *Narrative of the Troubles with the Indians in New-England, from the first planting thereof in the year 1607. to this present year 1677. But chiefly of the late Troubles in the last two years, 1675. and 1676. To which is added a Discourse about the Warre with the Pequods In the year 1637* (Boston, 1677).

days of "Publick Humiliation" for fasting and prayer.[44] These reprintings began the colonists' practice of obsessively citing their own statements about the war. They also began the practice of re-fixing in print—as a kind of fact[45]—the questionable legal documents which they had required the (usually non-English-speaking) Indian sachems to sign.

The mass quantity and recitative quality of colonists' war writings suggests what they wanted documents to accomplish during the war. By writing the war, and then repeating those statements, they reminded and reassured themselves of what they had said and how they had said it, an impulse which testifies to their sense that the war *was* what was said about it. The authority of the fixed word, no matter that it was written by a partisan group engaged in a deeply emotional conflict, stood as a final authority on the justness of the English cause, a fortress against any meanings the Indians might make of the war. By repeating the "official" pronouncements, they attempted to fix the record, and by fixing the record, they granted these documents official historical status *as* the record. Finally, by incorporating this record into their narratives, they tried to bring their writings

[44] See, for example, the restatements included in Nathaniel Saltonstall's three publications: *The Present State of New-England with Respect to the Indian War*, *A Continuation of the State of New-England, 1676*, and Saltonstall, *A New and Further Narrative of the State of New-England* in *Narratives of the Indian Wars, 1675-1699,* ed. Charles H. Lincoln (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1952).

[45] On the discourses of "fact" and "evidence" emergent during the early modern period, see Barbara J. Shapiro, *A Culture of Fact: England, 1550-1720* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), esp. 34-62. In particular, she discusses the processes whereby written documents came to serve as evidence regarding "matters of fact" in question, a role previously reserved for live, credible witnesses offering first-hand testimony.

into agreement with the one historical truth and create an apparently seamless narrative front.[46]

These colonial representations needed effectively to match up the colonies' public identity in England and Europe. Historian Jill Lepore has argued that, prior to the war, "early published accounts of the English colonists' adventures in New England stressed the pleasantness of their interactions with Indians; the fairness of their treaties; and, especially after 1640, the success of their efforts to convert the Indians to Christianity by teaching them to read the Bible."[47] Creating a coherent representation of the colonists and their actions for audiences on the other side of the Atlantic was more important at this moment than it had ever been before. The sensational nature of the war had brought the colonies before the broadest audiences in both England and elsewhere. Heretofore, colonial presses had primarily produced sermons, theological treatises, piety books, psalm books, catechisms, almanacs, public announcements, laws, and Indian bibles—publications not designed for external consumption. The readership outside the colonies for each of these genres would have been limited, primarily restricted to gifts between ministers. But war, like little else, had the power to attract the eyes of everyone from

[46] The Algonquians' attitude towards the historical and political authority of written documents repeatedly shows itself to be markedly different than English attitudes, and English writers cannot help but convey this different perspective, even as they insist upon its absurdity. In his 1675 "Relacion of the Indyan Warre," Rhode Islander John Easton reported that this privileging of parched English writing over an Indian's living speech constituted one of Philip's prime complaints. He writes that "a nother grivanc was when ther kings sold land the English wold say it was more than thay agred to and a writing must be prove against all them" (Easton, "Relacion," 11). Thus, when William Hubbard, for example, cites Philip's 1671 statement of submission to the English, a modern reader will see the colonists exploiting the very ambiguity and foreignness of language to bind Philip to a contract he may have only partially understood and almost certainly did not word. Even if Philip fully understood what the statement said, he probably did not attach the value to it that the English did [Jennings, *The Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975), 123-24, 137].

[47] Lepore, *Name of War*, 10.

court officials to ordinary people on the street.[48] *The London Gazette* printed supplements containing reports of the war, and published epistles about it were announced in the *Term* Catalogues, the London booksellers' brochure. Historian Stephen Saunders Webb claims that "London coffee consumers were as well informed about the origins and progress of the Algonquian uprising in New England as they were tardily and incompletely told of Virginia's Indian and civil wars."[49] The colonists may have explained and defended themselves more eloquently in other writings, but it was their war-time publications that met the largest audience. These words simply counted more.

King Philip's War: The Rhetoric

If "success" meant being able to integrate the colony's public, external identity with the reality at work inside it, the colonists thoroughly failed at this goal. No single writing seemed enough to put the matter to rest. Indeed, their endeavors were far from united or coherently orchestrated. Competing colonial writers at times went so far as to specifically and heatedly point out mistakes or biases in other colonists' accounts and to accuse them—and more significantly, their parent colonies—of both factual dishonesty and, worse, political wrongdoing against the Indians. The colonies were, in reality, striving against one another to a significant degree over land issues, borders, and Indian

[48] For reports sent directly to court officials, see the British *Calendar of State Papers*, *Colonial Series, America and West Indies, 1675-1676 also Addenda, 1574-1674, Preserved in the Public Record Office*, ed. W. Noel Sainsbury (London, 1893), 251-52, 317-19, 365-66, 368, 371-73, 405-06, 441-44.

[49] Webb, *1676*, 222.

policy, and these conflicts show up regularly, if quietly, in several of the key war narratives.

In light of the broader historical context outlined at the beginning of this chapter, such conflicts assume a graver significance. Divisive internal strife, for example, had plagued Protestantism from its beginnings. The Lutherans split from Rome, Melanchthon and Calvin from Luther, the Quakers, Wycliffites, Lollards, and Plymouth "Puritans" from the Anglicans, and the Presbyterians, Brownists, Baptists, and Roger Williams from the congregationalist Independents. The "priesthood of all believers," freed from the powerful centralizing authority of Rome or state churches, coupled with the righteous and high-minded piety of spiritual reformers, had splintered Christianity into hundreds of pieces.

This tendency to divisiveness, as much as Protestants' emphasis on a vernacular Bible and individual faith, had defined its followers in the eyes of distrustful leaders who sought to unify and control their countries. "A variety of sects," wrote the Spaniard Diego Saavedra Fajardo in his 1639 *Idea de un principe politico-cristiano* (Idea of a Politic-Christian Prince), "is the cause of the fall of empires."[50] His sentiments echoed those of many others. Both Catholics and Protestants used "sectarianism" as a hostile accusation against groups threatening to separate themselves off from a larger church body or social group. To display New England's own deep divisions was to reveal in them a flaw they had long attempted to neutralize: the accusation that their views and practices promoted social splintering. Indeed, the rift that emerged in the war between Rhode Island and the

[50] As quoted by Anthony Pagden in *Lords of All the World*, 148.

other colonies *was* based in religious and social differences. Unlike the settlers at Plymouth, the Massachusetts Bay colonists had always been careful to emphasize that they were not, technically, separatists.[51] And yet they had banished from their midst those who did not adhere to their strict social and religious codes. Many of the persecuted had eventually settled in Rhode Island, the dissenters' haven. Not surprisingly, Rhode Islanders and members of the other colonies were at odds over the war. Because Indian policies stood at the heart of the colonies' public identities and was a key factor in their economic and territorial growth, there was, perhaps, no topic better suited to display this flaw in their identities within orthodox Protestantism—and as we shall see, to suggest other, even more serious, flaws.

Rhode Island's John Easton, deputy governor at the time, was one of the first to publicly reveal deep divisions within the colonies by expressing his opposition to the practices of Plymouth, Massachusetts Bay, and Connecticut colonies. At the very outset of the war, he circulated an account of its origins and beginnings, and he did not scruple to cast harsh light on the other colonies' actions, especially Plymouth's. Perhaps most damningly, his narrative lists specific Indian complaints against the other English colonies—Massachusetts, Plymouth, and Connecticut—whom he carefully distinguishes from the "we" he reserves for Rhode Island. Easton directly took down these complaints

[51] In theory, that is, they believed in reforming the Anglican church, not splitting off from it, and more generally, they believed in establishing a true, reformed, church-state, rather than separating the church out from the state in order to keep it pure. By moving to New England, that had not intended to leave England behind them, as had the Plymouth settlers. Instead, they had intended to bring England along with them by setting a model for them. See the major ecclesiastical statements of the New England congregational churches: Richard Mather et. al., *A Platform of Church-Discipline Gathered Out of the Word of God* (Camridge, 1649); and John Cotton *The Way of Congregational Churches Cleared* (London, 1648).

from a pre-war conference between Philip, Philip's counsel, and several Rhode Islanders. Philip's indictments against the other English colonies pour out one upon another:

> [Philip and his counsel] said thay had bine the first in doing good to the English, and the English the first in doing rong, saied when the English first Came their kings father was as a great man and the English as a litell Child, he Constraened other Indians from ronging the English and gave them Coren and shewed them how to plant and was free to do them ani good and had let them have a 100 times more land, then now the king had for his own peopell, but ther kings brother when he was king Came miserabely to dy by being forsed to Court as thay judged poisoned[52] . . .

The grievances multiplied and soon turned to English greed for land.

> A nother grivanc was when ther kings sold land the English wold say it was more than thay agred to and a writing must be prove against all them, and sum of ther kings had dun rong to sell so much . . . sum being given to drunknes the English made them drunk and then cheted them in bargens, but now ther kings wear forewarned not for to part with land for nothing in Cumpareson to the valew therof. Now home the English had owned for king or queen thay wold disinherit, and make a nother king that wold give or seell them there land, that now thay had no hopes left to kepe ani land.

[52] Here Easton refers to Philip's suspicion that his brother, Alexander, sachem before him, had been poisoned while in English custody. For an English account of this affair, see Hubbard, *Narrative of the Troubles*.

Easton continues to list still more of Philip's grievances.[53] At the conclusion of the list he notes, in a rare moment for colonial records, the colonists' awareness that the Indians felt unjustly treated. "We knew before these were ther grand Cumplaints," he admits.[54] Here Easton simultaneously acknowledges the Indians' point of view, chooses not to contradict their claims, and then admits that the Rhode Islanders, at least, had long been aware that these issues angered Philip and his fellow Indians. His final expression of dissent, of course, was to be so bold as to write down all these indictments against the other colonies.

Easton's personal antipathy as a Quaker toward Plymouth settlers notwithstanding, his disagreement with his colonial neighbors indicates the serious—and increasingly public—ways in which the colonists were having problems with one another and with their new American environment. The colonies' differing moralities regarding treatment of native populations were leading toward sectarian splintering. Or perhaps it was the converse. Sectarian splintering may have produced different attitudes within the opposing groups about the moral way to treat native populations. Either way, the two problems were connected, and they not only highlighted the existence of social divisiveness within the colonies, but also brought to public view two serious problems for New England's collective identity: questions about their moral behavior towards Indians,

[53] [the account continues] . . . A nother grivanc the English Catell and horses still increased that when thay removed 30 mill from wher English had anything to do, thay Could not kepe ther coren from being spoyled, thay never being iused to fence, and thoft when the English boft land of them that thay wold have kept ther Catell upon ether owne land. A nother grevanc the English wear so eger to sell the Indians lickers that most of the Indians spent all in drunknes and then ravened upone the sober Indians and thay did belive often did hurt the English Catell, and ther kings Could not prevent it.

[54] Easton, "Relacion," 10-11.

and in tandem, questions about the legality of their land-acquisition procedures in America.

To acknowledge that the Indians had complaints, and then to articulate them on paper, was to instate a concession of human rights to Indians. Although present-day readers often assume that Europeans acknowledged no such rights for indigenous peoples, major legal thinkers of the day generally agreed that even "savages" had rights and had to be treated accordingly. "However 'savage,' however 'odious' to European sensibilities the Native Americans might appear to be, however extraneous to the objectives of the colonists, few Europeans could accept that they were anything other than human, and as human they clearly possessed both political and territorial rights," argues Anthony Pagden.[55] The only argument to the contrary, derived in part from Augustine, suggested that since power issued from God's grace, any ungodly people who did not share in God's grace could not exercise rights. The consequences of such an argument, however, were extreme. *Any* ruler or people considered "ungodly" by another might therefore be removed from power or from their lands. Nearly everyone recognized that the argument laid open the way for any ruler to depose any other on the grounds of religious difference alone. In practical terms, James Otis argued in 1764, it was a "madness" which had been "pretty generally exploded and hissed off the stage."[56] As we will see, England's acknowledgement of Indian rights became a key means by which it compared itself positively to Spain. They would claim not to have ruthlessly murdered the natives, as had the devilish, popish Spaniards.

[55] Pagden, *Lords of All the World*, 75.

[56] As quoted in Pagden, *Lords of All the World*, 76.

Yet Easton here suggests that even New England's behavior was neither fair nor legal. More importantly, he does so against an emergent war rhetoric that, in spite of Europeans' *legal* acknowledgement of native rights, advanced its cause precisely by portraying the Indians as inhuman beasts without rationality or the ability to exercise rights. In contrast to Easton, other colonial writers, almost without exception, ascribe the Indians' motives to simple "cruel barbarity" without any reasonable cause, thereby entirely relieving the English of any blame in starting the war or of any suspicion of illegal land acquisition. William Hubbard's *Narrative of the Troubles with the Indians* provides the most extreme example of this pro-English rhetoric and was also the most widely purchased account of the war. Hubbard early on dismisses the possibility that the English might have shared responsibility for the war through their aggressive land-acquisition policies or that they had obligations towards the natives: "Upon a due Enquiry into all preceding Transactions between the *Indians* and the *English*, from their first settling in these Coasts, there will appear no Ground of Quarrel that any of them had against the *English*, nor any Appearance of Provocation upon one Account or other." From this point in the narrative onward, Hubbard grows increasingly dismissive and nasty in his vilifications of Indian motives. He reduces their causes to "meer Malice and Spight," the "instigation of Satan," "Naughtiness of [Philip's own] Heart," "Prejudice and Malice against the English, with which they themselves were (though without Cause) imbittered," and "insolent Rage and Cruelty." At the same time, his language steadily moves towards portraying the Algonquians as mere animals motivated only by bloodlust. Philip is a "savage Miscreant," "treacherous and perfidious Caitiff," "Ungrateful,

perfidiously False and Cruel," and his fellow Algonquians are "like Wolves continually yelling and gaping for their Prey," "barbarous Villains," "perfidious, cruel and hellish Monsters," and "children of the Devil, full of all Subtilty and Malice."[57]

Yet if these "wolves" were treated as humans with rights, as colonists such as Easton and fellow (if adversarial) Rhode Islander Roger Williams insisted upon doing,[58] the legal picture changed radically—and as a result, the picture of the colonists changed as well. In stark contrast to Hubbard's *Narrative*, Easton reports a meeting where natives carefully articulated the wrongs they perceived to have been done against them, especially by Plymouth. Moreover, Easton repeatedly emphasizes that the war could have been prevented by arbitration were the other English colonists more discreet and less land-hungry. "We had Case to thinke in that had bine tendred it [arbitration] wold have bine accepted." Instead of arbitration, Easton claims, the English fired the first shot—a portrait in direct contrast to all the war reports that would follow his. Nor could Easton stop there. He must also note that "in this war I have not herd of [Indians] tormenting ani but that the English army Cote an old Indian and tormented him." In the closing paragraphs of his narrative, Easton suggests that the English went to war against the Narragansetts out of land greed, because they wanted for themselves territory allotted to

[57] By the time he describes the brutal English attack on the Narragansetts' winter swamp fort, he has reduced them from the relative dignity of "Enemy" to the status of mere flesh: "The English seeing their Advantage, began to fire the Wigwams, where was supposed to be many of the Enemies Women and Children destroyed, by the firing of at least five or six hundred of those smoaky Cells. It is reported by them that first entred the *Indians* Fort, that our Soldiers came upon them when they were ready to dress their Dinner; but one sudden and unexpected Assault put them besides that Work, making their Cookrooms too hot for them at that Time, when they and their Mitchin fryed together." Hubbard, *Narrative of the Troubles*, 7, 10, 11, 36, 37, 11, 13, 14, 33, 37, 42, 42, 53.

[58] See esp. Williams' *A Key into the Language of America: or, An Help to the Language of the Natives in That Part of America, Called New-England* (London, 1643).

Rhode Island Colony: "for we do kno the English have had much contention against those Indians to invaled the kings determination for naroganset to be in our colony, and we have Case to think it was the greatest Case of the war against them."[59] Such a narrative would necessarily have forced questions before the public eye domestically and abroad about the colonies' land annexation policies, and thus also about colonial and English identities as imperial agents. Because European legal discourse had had much to say about making land claims in American territories, colonial war writings were received by an audience sensitive to the larger ramifications of accusations like Easton's and defenses like Hubbard's. Most readers would know nothing of underlying motives (such as Easton's Quaker antagonism toward the Plymouth settlers), but many knew the more evident stakes, which were no less than the very legality of New England's occupation of North American land.

Colonial leaders' reactions to one another's writings thus pointed to political–ethical problems emerging within and among the colonies, and to worries about growing identity problems. Although Easton was publicly condemned by Massachusetts, to writers such as Increase Mather and William Hubbard and others he was a legally credible speaker. Nearly 60 years old when the war broke out, he was attorney-general of Rhode Island for many years, a deputy governor during the war, and in 1690, became governor of the colony.[60] Moreover, Easton's point of view was echoed by several, if a limited few, other colonial leaders familiar with the Indians—in addition to the

[59] Easton, "Relacion," 11, 14, 17.

[60] Charles H. Lincoln, ed., *Narratives of the Indian Wars, 1675-99* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1952), 5-6.

controversial Roger Williams, these included Massachusetts' own John Eliot, and Daniel Gookin, to name a few. Although dissenters like Eliot and Gookin nearly got hanged by a Boston mob for their Indian advocacy, their insistent and vocal challenges to people like Hubbard were loud enough to disfigure the front of total colonial unity, and to raise questions about both their settlements' legality and the colonists' morality.

This second issue—colonial morality—was made clear in a set of disputes that arose not *between* the individual colonies, but *within* the most important and powerful of the colonies—Massachusetts. If John Easton and William Hubbard battled over how to characterize the Indians and their complaints about land purchases, the Bay Colony's own Increase Mather and William Hubbard argued over how to characterize the *colonists*. While many scholars have interpreted this disagreement as the conflict between Hubbard's proto-modern, scientific mind and Mather's more outdated, superstitious, and religious mind, or even between Mather's biased and passionate mind and Hubbard's more sophisticated and subtle,[61] these arguments do not bear up under a close reading of the primary texts. I agree with Michael P. Winship that the two writers do not significantly differ in their portrayal of whether or how God intervened providentially in the war. Both frame the war in a Puritan providentialist worldview, both believe the English to be essentially just in their motives for and execution of war, and both present the Indians as acting without provocation.

[61] See Michael P. Winship's discussion of "the common historiographical interpretation of Hubbard" in *Seers of God: Puritan Providentialism in the Restoration and Early Enlightenment* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 162 n. 64.

Where the two do depart radically, however, is in their portrayal of the colonists' character or identity—who the colonists are as English men and women, and as Protestants. While Hubbard represents the colonists as full of valor, courage, loyalty, perseverance, strength, and noble suffering, Mather's colonists are too concerned about their clothes, pursue personal financial gain on plantations too far from their religious communities, show themselves too slow to change their hearts when praying for their homes and barnes, and rely too heavily on themselves rather than on their community and God. Hubbard's portrayal is enthusiastically propagandistic; Mather's is piously critical. Although they rely on the same basic religious outlook to write their narratives, the meanings they draw about the war and the colonists nearly oppose one another. That is, they are seeing largely the same facts, but interpreting them in different ways, from different positions within the colonies' identity politics.

Consider first Hubbard, whose portrayal of the colonists is unfailingly partisan. Of the notorious Narragansett swamp attack in which so many Indian women and children were surprised and burned to death in their wigwams, Hubbard says this about English soldiering:

> It is hard to say who acquitted themselves best in that Days Service, either the Soldiers for their manlike Valour in fighting, or the Commanders for their Wisdom and Courage; leading on in the very Face of Death. There might one have seen the whole Body of that little regimental Army, as busie as Bees in a Hive, some bravely fighting with the Enemy, others haling off, and carrying away the Dead and wounded Men; which I rather

> note, that none may want the due Testimony of their Valour and Faithfulness, though all ought to say, *Not unto us, but unto thy name, O Lord, & c.*

In other places, Hubbard's soldiers prove such formidable fighters that they cause the Indians to run away scared: "Upon [the approach of a company of English], the Enemy, pretty well acquainted by this last Encounter with the Valour of the *English*, immediately went clear away."

Hubbard's soldiers, moreover, are not fighting a war brought on by their own greed or waywardness from God, as Mather suggests. Granted, Hubbard occasionally allows that God is directing events in order to teach the colonists a lesson. However, he never specifically names any "provoking evils" whereby the colonists have angered God. Instead, Hubbard's colonists are "Martyrs that have laid down and ventured their Lives, as a Testimony to the Truth of their Religion, as well as Love to their Country." Even their failures are the result of "Time and Chance," and "the Counsel of God [that] hath preordained, that no Flesh might glory in their own Wisdom, but give unto God the Praise of all their Successes, and quietly bear whatever miscarriages he hath ordered to befall them," rather than resulting from any mistakes on their own part. In Hubbard's account, the English can do no wrong, although they suffer defeat time and again. They are always valorous, courageous, and good English Protestants.[62]

In stark contrast, Mather argues that the colonists' first generation did not have sins "ripe for so dreadful a Judgment, until *the Body of the first Generation* was removed,

[62] Hubbard, *Narrative of the Troubles*, 53, 39, 40, 28.

and another Generation risen up which hath not so pursued, as ought to have been, the blessed design of their Fathers, in following the Lord into this Wilderness, whilst it was a land not sown."[63] The present outward catastrophes resulted from the too-long inward selfishness and irreligion of the current generation. Admittedly, latter-day readers of jeremiads have long argued that this genre was an only half-believed rhetorical device—that its cry of "declension!" was effective but not fully believed by or believable to the colonists in their day.[64] Yet, while Mather's criticisms relied on a well-established rhetorical device, it is hard to imagine that his readers brushed it off. Several historians have argued that Mather's correlation of outward tribulation with inward failures was more persuasive to this audience than earlier jeremiad arguments, and eventually catapulted Mather into a higher esteem than he had previously held in his not undistinguished life.[65] He was, in this sense, playing classical identity politics—advancing his political position and his own career by appealing to colonists' felt sense of who they were and what problems their society needed to address.

Within this darker outlook, Mather's soldiers are not as pious, devout, and brave as Hubbard's. In his version of the affair, they include rough characters, they doubt God, they experience cowardice, and they even go insane, a fate English readers would have seen as befitting evil-doers. "An awful Providence happened at this time" he notes near

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[63] Increase Mather, *A Brief History of the War with the Indians in New-England* (Boston 1676; London 1676); reprinted in *The History of King Philip's War*, ed. Samuel Gardner Drake (Albany, NY.: J. Munsell, 1862; Bowie, Md.: Heritage Books, 1990), 47.

[64] For two different understandings of how the jeremiad was used, see Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: From Colony to Province*, 27-39**;** and Sacvan Bercovitch, *The American Jeremiad* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978).

[65] See Michael G. Hall, *The Last American Puritan: The Life of Increase Mather* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1988), 119-54.

the beginning of his narrative. "For a Souldier (a stout man) who was sent from *Water-town* . . . was possessed with a strong conceit, that God was against the *English*; whereupon he immediately ran distracted, and so was returned home a lamentable Spectacle." Hubbard, notably, does not report this incident. Nor does he mention an incident in which a group of English soldiers going out to retrieve several dead bodies were surprised by a small group of Indians and abandoned their commander. Seeing the Indians, "the greatest part of the *English* did unworthily for sake their *Leader* in that hazard, only seven remained with him."[66]

It is not just Mather's soldiers who act badly. His colonists are not as innocent as Hubbard's, either. For example, he quotes the Boston General Court's resolution regarding the colonists' faults and their need for reformation:

> That some effectual course should be taken for the suppression of those proud Excesses in Apparel, hair, &c. which many (yea and the poorer sorte as well as others) are shamfully guilty of. That a due testimony should be borne against such as are false Worshippers, especially Idolatrous *Quakers*, who set up Altars against the Lords Altar, yea who set up a Christ whom the Scriptures know not. That whereas excess in drinking is become a common Sin, meanes should be used to prevent an unnecessary multiplication of Ordinaries, and to keep Town dwellers from frequenting Taverns.

[66] Mather, *Brief History of the War*, 58, 91.

The list goes on to include the prohibition of "oppression by merchants" and exploitation at "*Indian* Trading-houses"—both instances of colonists' growing economic power and aggression. Mather also argues that outlying regions of the colonies had brought some of their own wartime troubles upon themselves, both by harassing the local natives and by abandoning their religious communities to pursue economic gain on far-flung plantations: "Some," he admits, " . . . were from the beginning of the War, not without sad Apprehensions concerning the Inhabitants in those parts of the Country, in that they were a scattered people, and such as had many of them Scandalized the Heathen, and lived themselves too like unto the Heathen, without any *Instituted Ordinances.*"[67]

I do not mean to present Mather as simply trying to create bad press for the colonies, while Hubbard created good public images. Even Mather's more negative portrayal could advance a powerful argument about the colonists' chosen relationship to God and the meaning of the war.[68] Nevertheless, although both writers find powerful ways to authorize the position of the English colonists, they do so through opposing means, particularly by characterizing the colonists in radically divergent ways. These jarring differences would have been apparent to any reader. They only worsened when

[67] Mather, *Brief History of the War*, 100, 89, 89-90.

[68] In particular, it rehearsed the same confession that Philip was forced to sign in his 1671 treaty with the English. From the "naughtiness" of their "hearts," Mather shows, the colonists have sinned against God, their "ancient Friend," and now, apprised of their folly, they return to submit themselves to his sovereignty. The lengthy and vividly-told confession of the colonists to God is written in blood and ink across the pages of Mather's narrative as he interprets and writes the war and the colonists responses to it. Every sentence of the narrative weighs towards this argument. The effect of the whole, I would argue, is to offer up for public view a contract almost identical to the one which Philip had signed and Hubbard had re-published. Through the authority of this contract, now fixed in writing through Mather's historical and interpretive efforts, the colonists are bound to God in the same way that Philip was supposedly bound to the United Colonies. Conversely, to the degree that Mather has persuaded his readers of the importance of covenants and re-submitting to the covenant when breached, he has also persuaded them of Philip's absolute guilt in the war. The authority of writing, especially contractual writing, and the obligations to a single hierarchical sovereignty entailed by such writing, here as elsewhere, emerge as the fundamental morals of the war.

Increase Mather wrote an additional account, his *Relation of the Troubles which have hapned in New-England, By reason of the Indians there. From the Year 1614. to the Year 1675* (1677), to rebut the early parts of Hubbard's narrative. As a result, as historian Francis Jennings has noted, "the evidence of disunity among the Puritan leadership is overwhelming." While he argues that Hubbard's "racial bombast" successfully "disguise[d] the issues that divided even orthodox Connecticut from orthodox Massachusetts, let alone heterodox Rhode Island from both," I would argue, in contrast, that the competing reports of the war, as well as competing characterizations of the colonists, made the "bombast" considerably less successful.[69] Mather's darker version, in contrast, was a fairer representation of the choices of identity which were at stake in judging the evidence of the war.

The significance of these matters was, if anything, increased by their appearance in "reports" and "histories" rather than in abstract sermons or legal treatises on colonial Indian policy. As historians of science have argued, the value of empirical testimony was on the rise during the seventeenth century in multiple kinds of discourse, from the "new science" to the new current-events reporting, the new natural histories, the emergent chorographies, histories and legal depositions. In particular, it was during the seventeenth century, argues Barbara Shapiro, that law courts' methods for determining "matters of fact" began to be imported into other "discourses of fact," especially history, travel narratives, popular wonder writings, and the new science. Drawing on legal methods for determining truth, members of other professions began to consider first-hand, eye-witness

[69] Jennings, *Invasion of America*, 300.

testimony as the primary source of information regarding a "fact" under question. In the process, they transformed the very notion of "testimony." In addition to traditional oral statements given before a judge or jury, testimony would now also include written documents recorded by eye-witnesses. And just as the courts attempted to determine whether an act or acts were indeed committed as charged, so, too, the "matters of fact" at the center of historical reports and narratives were not necessarily taken as necessarily "true," as our modern usage of the word implies. "'Fact' or 'matter of fact' was not considered 'true' or suitable to be believed," argues Shapiro, "until satisfactory evidence had been presented. A 'matter of fact' was an *issue* placed before a jury as to whether a particular person had performed a particular act or set of acts. 'Fact' in the legal context therefore did not mean an established truth but an alleged act whose occurrence was in contention."

From this perspective, we can see that Mather's, Hubbard's, and Easton's historical reports thus carried weight as a kind of legal "evidence," testified by firsthand observers of events on which the participants could not agree. The ultimate goal of such writing, as in a court of law, was to procure an audience's judgments on the true nature of what occurred, and thus to prove the innocence – or guilt – of the alleged participants in the act. To his fellow historians, Thomas Fuller wrote in 1650 that "if the Witnesses be suborned, the Record falsified, or the Evidence wrested, neither posterity can Judge rightly of the Actions of the present time; or this time, give a certain Judgment of the

Ages past."[70] But as in a court of law, often the audience was not posterity but one's contemporaries. For settlers in America, it was present-day readers who needed to know what to think of colonists under suspicion of having committed crimes and whether to intervene in their affairs.

Arguments over the colonists' character and questions about the legitimacy of their behavior would have struck a sensitive chord with English and European audiences partly because of *who* these New Englanders were, socially. As discussed earlier, Protestantism had long been suspected of fostering social insubordination, in addition to its tendency to splinter countries apart along sectarian lines. Quakers, who refused to recognize social rank at all and allowed women to preach, were only an extreme case of what was seen as (and indeed *was*) a broader tendency. In France, Germany, and England, maintaining the social order meant keeping dissenting Protestants in place. It was only in America that reformers from the middling ranks of society had found significant freedom to set up the radical social changes many of their number called for. Although, in the wake of the Antinomian Controversy (1636-38), many traditional social strictures were re-instated in Massachusetts Bay to limit lay authority in the churches and the spiritual authority of women, New England was still a place where a remarkable amount of political power and wealth had accrued to those who would traditionally have been denied such status—a place where such people had achieved new identities and the political power to assert their point of view. "The people wherewith you plant [a colony, or "plantation"] ought to be gardeners, ploughmen, labourers, smiths, carpenters, joiners,

[70] Barbara Shapiro, *A Culture of Fact: England, 1550-1720* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), 11; Thomas Fuller, *The Appeal of Injured Innocence* (London, 1650), 16.

fishermen, fowlers, with some few apothecaries, surgeons, cooks, and bakers," wrote Francis Bacon. Nevertheless, "let not the government of the plantation depend upon too many counsellors and undertakers in the country that planteth . . . and let those be rather noblemen and gentlemen than merchants; for they look ever to the present gain."[71]

If men like Bacon did not want colonists or even middling sorts in charge of colonial governments, consider, then, the state's concerns about dissenting colonial Protestants who actually controlled England's overseas colonial possessions in New England and who had taken up a violent—and public—struggle with America's natives over the appropriation of yet more land and power. Colonists' accrual of wealth through land acquisition troubled the crown for this reason alone—its desire to preserve traditional social order and political power in traditional hands. New Englanders' importance as representatives for England in its developing identity as an imperial nation would have made the matter particularly sensitive.

Viewed in this larger context, we begin to see how the crown's concerns about social stability, sectarianism, and morality were closely interwoven with its worries over colonists' Indian policies. These worries emerge more clearly still when King Philip's War is placed in the even broader context of international European discourse about how to treat Indians in America. It is not only modern-day historians who speak critically of the contempt, abuse, and treachery with which Europeans treated Native Americans. By the late seventeenth century, an international discourse had developed condemning inhumane treatment of colonized natives. To be sure, this discourse did not commonly

[71] Francis Bacon, "Of Plantations," in *The Essayes or Counsels, Civill and Morall of Francis Lo. Verulam, Viscount St. Alban* (London, 1625), 202.

extend to enslaved Africans, who were being bought and sold by the thousands throughout English territories, and it did not deny Europeans' rights to govern Indians, convert them, and possess their lands according to certain protocol.[72] Moreover, it certainly had not become anything close to a dominant tenor in rhetoric about colonized native Americans. Yet, as we shall see, it held a particular cachet in England because it was used to distinguish English (and in the Netherlands, Dutch) colonial rule from Spanish practices, and even to legitimize legally England's possessions. The kind of questions Increase Mather, William Hubbard, and John Easton had raised about the colonists' morality and behavior thus hit an international nerve regarding Europeans' morality towards Indians. And it struck at the very core of English justifications for their colonial activities, thereby endangering England's investments as well as its emerging imperial identity.

Black Legends and Public Tears: The Transnational Appeal

The rhetorical implications of the war writings grow clearer in light of international European conversations about how colonizers ought to relate to native peoples. In one variation after another, all claimed that Europeans' primary mission in the Americas was to convert the Indians. "The banner under which all the European nations

[72] See Anthony Pagden's introduction to Bartolome de Las Casas, *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies*, ed. and trans. Nigel Griffin (London: Penguin Books, 1992), xiii-xli.

had marched across the globe was, of course, religion," Anthony Pagden has written.[73] Louis XIII, for example, had granted a patent for the settlement of New France so that the French could "discover . . . some habitation capable of sustaining colonies, for the purpose of attempting, with divine assistance, to bring the peoples who inhabit them to the knowledge of the true God, to civilise them and to instruct them in the faith and Apostolic, Catholic and Roman religion."[74] Literary scholar Thomas Scanlan goes so far as to argue that in sermons by divines Robert Gray and William Symonds, "colonialism becomes not only a vehicle for carrying Englishness and Protestantism to the new world . . . but also the very means by which the English can re-affirm their identity as Protestants and as a nation."[75] That is, in these sermons converting the Indians is conceived as such a high purpose that it not only serves as the rationale for colonization, but it also defines the purpose and very nature of the English nation itself.

Present-day onlookers typically either dismiss this banner of religion as mere hypocrisy guising European greed, or they condemn even its apparently sincere forms as forms of ideological coercion. Yet it would be unwise to dismiss the force of its *rhetoric* as a means for legitimating European claims to overseas possessions. Through this discourse, Europeans structured public representations of their relationship to native peoples. It allowed them to argue that they had come, as the Massachusetts Bay Seal indicated, primarily as missionaries and bringers of the true church, not to find wealth,

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[73] Pagden, "Europe and the Wider World," 210. On the connections between King Philip's war, anti-hispanism, and rhetoric about the Indians, see also Lepore, *Name of War*, 9-11.

[74] As quoted by Pagden, "Europe and the Wider World," 210.

[75]Thomas Scanlan, *Colonial Writing and the New World, 1583-1671: Allegories of Desire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 93-122.

cheap labor, and new lands. Although this missionary mandate had been undertaken with rigor in Spanish, French, and, to some degree, Portuguese territories in America, the English in New England and Virginia had hardly dedicated themselves to the cause. With the exception of John Eliot in Massachusetts, almost no New England Protestants worked closely to teach and convert Indians, and as several historians have noted, even Eliot did not get started until the mid-1650s – nearly 15 years after he initially arrived in America. Nevertheless, the rhetoric of saving the Indians remained a significant tool in the English arsenal of justifications for colonization. According to that rhetoric, the New England colonists had shipped themselves to America, as the imaginary Indian in the Massachusetts Bay Colony Seal said, to "come over and help us."

The English had taken this role of savior and built on it. In their self-representations, they not only saved the Indians' from paganism; they also protected them from the Spanish. In a rhetorical maneuver they shared with the Dutch in Brazil and Scots in the Isthmus of Darien, the English in North America presented themselves as the Indians' champions against the cruel and oppressive and popish Portuguese and Spanish. Their settlement, in this version of events, formed a kind of benevolent protectorate insulating Indians from violent Catholic imperialists who embodied the "antichrist." Historian Carla Gardina Pestana argues that "the link between Protestantism and an anti-Catholic foreign policy continued as part of the British sense of identity and of its role in the world at least through the eighteenth century."[76] Narratives about dealings with

[76] Carla Gardina Pestana, "Religion," 73. See also Pagden, "Europe and the Wider World," 214-15; Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1787* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1992) and Kathleen Wilson, *The Sense of the People: Politics, Culture and Imperialism in England, 1715-1785* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995)

natives thus reveal the colonists' negotiations for identity on an international stage, as well.

To gain a sense of this international rhetoric about saving the Indians, consider the following sequence of publications. In 1656, a London publisher produced a short book entitled *The Tears of the Indians: Being an Historical and True Account of the Cruel Massacres and Slaughters of Above Twenty Millions of Innocent People; Committed by the Spaniards in the Islands of Hispaniola, Cuba, Jamaica, &c. As also, in the Continent of Mexico, Peru, & Other Places of the West Indies, to the Total Destruction of those Countries. Written in Spanish by Casaus, an Eye-witness of Those Things; and Made English by J.P.* The book was a liberally translated edition of Bartolome de las Casas's famous 1552 work *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies,* itself a devastating critique of Spanish colonialism in the Americas and especially the genocide of indigenous peoples. As a Jesuit priest dedicated to evangelizing the Indians, Las Casas had witnessed first-hand the activities of which he spoke. The first few paragraphs of his "Prologue" to the *Short Account* argue "that it would constitute a criminal neglect of my duty to remain silent about the enormous loss of life as well as the infinite number of human souls dispatched to Hell in the course of such 'conquests', and so [I] resolved to publish an account of a few such outrages"—in order, he argues, that his ruler might correct these wrongs and conduct Spanish conquest the *right* way.[77] Las Casas, thus, was not against colonization per se. Rather, he was against the brutality and bloodshed of it,

[77] Bartolome de Las Casas, *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies* (Seville, 1552), ed. and trans., Nigel Griffin (London: Penguin, 1992)

which he saw as unnecessary to the pursuit of the larger goal: evangelizing the Indians and establishing Spanish leadership in the Americas.

English publishers had a slightly different use for the book than had Las Casas: to justify their colonization efforts by showing them to be superior to Spanish activities. The 1656 English version of Las Casas' account is turned to convenient political advantage by a preface that argues for immediate military action against "your Old and Constant Enemies, the SPANIARDS, a Proud, Deceitful, Cruel, and Trecherous Nation, whose chiefest Aim hath been the Conquest of this Land [England], and to enslave the People of this Nation."[78] Las Casas could not have anticipated that his work, meant to correct the activities of Spanish conquistadors, would be used to vilify Spaniards in general. Nevertheless, his book made convenient political fodder for perpetuating what later came to be called the Black Legend. Historian William S. Maltby has examined how Las Casas's work became the "cornerstone" of the Black Legend, "the stereotype of the Spaniard himself as lecherous, deceitful, and cruel" that developed out of an anti-hispanism in England perpetuated by English translations of anti-Spanish stories.[79]

In addition to indicting the Spanish, *Tears of the Indians* would have resonated awkwardly with colonial accounts of King Philip's War. Its opening paragraphs introduce the same vocabulary that appears throughout colonial Indian war narratives:

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[78] "To All True English-men" in *Tears of the Indians: Being an Historical and True Account of the Cruel Massacres and Slaughters of Above Twenty Millions of Innocent People; Committed by the Spaniards in the Islands of Hispaniola, Cuba, Jamaica, &c. As also, in the Continent of Mexico, Peru, & Other Places of the West Indies, to the Total Destruction of those Countries. Written in Spanish by Casaus, an Eye-witness of Those Things; and Made English by J.P.* (London, 1656).

[79] William S. Maltby, *The Black Legend in England: The Development of Anti-Spanish Sentiment, 1558-1660* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1971), 3, 12.

> As for those that came out of Spain, boasting themselves to be Christians, they took two several waies to extirpate this nation [in Hispaniola] from the face of the Earth; the first whereof was a bloody, unjust, and cruel war which they made upon them: a second by cutting off all that so much as sought to recover their liberty, as some of the stouter sort did intend. . . . That which led the Spaniards to these unsanctified impieties was the desire of Gold, to make themselves suddenly rich, for the obtaining of dignities & honours which were no way fit for them. In a word, their covetousness, their ambition, which could not be more in any people under heaven, the riches of the Countrey, and the patience of the people gave occasion to this their devilish barbarism. . . . the Indians never gave them the least cause to offer them violence, but received them as Angels sent from heaven, till their excessive cruelties, the torments and slaughters of their Countrymen mov'd them to take Armes against the Spaniards.[80]

Most significantly for our present purposes, the paragraph rehearses all the sensitive topics in colonial writings about King Philip's War that we have already encountered: it labels the Europeans' war "unjust, cruel, and bloody"—terms the English colonists assigned to Philip and his warriors. It condemns the "grievous yoke of servitude" not so distant from the English slave ships loaded with captured Indians that sailed out of Boston. It calls the Europeans' acts, not Indians', "devilish barbarism." It charges the Europeans with un-Christian greed, the accusation raised by Easton and Philip against

[80] *The Tears of the Indians,* 5-6.

Plymouth. This work, a hundred years old but newly published in English only a few years before New England's war, would have set up awkward comparisons between New England and the Spanish in the minds of many readers. Later in 1656, a second edition of Las Casas work appeared in London.

English readers might have noticed the marked incongruity between these Las Casas titles and yet another London title printed in 1653 and written by John Eliot, New England's own "Apostle to the Indians." Eliot's book was entitled *Tears of Repentance: or, A further Narrative of the Progress of the Gospel Amongst the Indians in Nevv-England.* In this work, Eliot's Indians cried a different kind of tears: the kind that led to Christian conversion. Theirs were religious tears, rather than the tears of oppression and unjust suffering. Eliot's work characterized the English as having modeled the *right* kind of colonialism—the kind that Las Casas wished the Spaniards could have achieved: Christian colonialism advancing the "progress of the gospel" rather than the promotion of men's fortunes. Thus again, English colonists identified with the moral and legal right, over and against the Spaniards' way.

The bibliography of tears, however, received a complicating new entry in 1676 when colonial poet Benjamin Tompson published in London his epic poem, *New-England's Tears For Her Present Miseries, or, A Late and True Relation of the Calamities of New-England Since April Last Past*. Tompson here accomplishes a neat inversion that signals how complicated the colonists' position was becoming: in his work, New England cries, not the Indians, as her inhabitants and lands suffer "calamities" at the hands of "devilish barbarians." Although it is unknown whether Tompson was familiar

with *Tears of the Indians,* in his version of the progression of tears Las Casas's sense get shuffled around a bit. Ultimately it is the English that "never gave them the least cause to offer them violence," but ministered to them "as Angels sent from heaven, till their excessive cruelties, the torments and slaughters . . . mov'd them to take Armes against the . . ."—here, insert "Indians" for "Spaniards."

This progression of titles sets up several pairs of dichotomies, but it is not the English-versus-Indians opposition that motivates these books. It is not colonized vs. colonizer. Instead, the texts contrast the English to the Spanish and the Catholic to the Protestant. These texts about Indians are thus less anthropological and more political in implication, more interested in defining the colonial community than its indigenous other. In the context of Las Casas and *Tears of the Indians*, English colonists in America became representatives of England as a nation, while their colonial relations with the Indians became a measure of England's culture and political society in comparison to Spain's or that of other European nations. English and Indian tears thus fell in a much broader, more conflicted context—one which would have brought the colonists under considerable scrutiny and, for some audiences, outright censure. [81]

[81] Lepore supports this view that "at least as far back as the Reformation, the English had measured themselves—their civility, their piety,their humanity—against other Europeans, especially the Spanish,whom they condemned for their cruelty to Protestants during the Spanish Inquisition . . . [and later] against the Indians during the conquest of Mexico." Lepore, *Name of War*, xiv. For a fuller discussion of anti-hispanism in English colonial writings, see Scanlan, *Colonial Writing and the New World.* See also Maltby, *The Black Legend in England,* and Peter Lake, "Anti-popery: The Structure of a Prejudice" in *Conflict in Early Stuart England: Studies in Religion and Politics, 1603-1642*, ed. Richard Cust and Ann Hughes (London: Longman, 1989).

The Politics of Rhetoric

> "I confess, when one thinks upon the crying Barbarities with which the most of these *Europaeans* that have Peopled this New world, became the Masters of it; it looks but *Ominously*. When one also thinks how much the way of living in many parts of *America,* is utterly inconsistent with the very Essentials of *Christianity*; yea, how much Injury and Violence is therein done to *Humanity* it self; it is enough to damp the Hopes of the most Sanguine Complexion. . . . Nevertheless, on the other side, what shall be said of all the *Promises*, That *our Lord Jesus Christ shall have the uttermost parts of the Earth for his Possession?*"
>
> —Cotton Mather, *Wonders of the Invisible World,* 1693

King Philip's war was not the only major historical event to threaten New England colonists' prosperity, autonomy, and reputation in the seventeenth century. Other historical events, in fact, are better known to most American historians. In the past, they have poured over the effects of Charles II's 1660 Restoration on the colonies and their development of the so-called "Half-Way Covenant" (1662), when they drastically compromised church admission policies in order to baptize the children of the second generation, many of whom had never experienced conversion. These two events have generally been considered the most powerful challenges to the budding colony prior to the 1684 charter recall. The 1660s also saw what would remain, until 1692, the colony's most serious outbreak of witchcraft and witch-trials, in Hartford, Connecticut. In addition, the colonies during this period experienced rapid growth in the Dutch population—a troubling phenomenon to many—and the explosion of hostilities with Quakers, including the torture and maiming of numerous Quakers, and the Massachusetts Bay's notorious hanging of Mary Dyer and three male Quakers in 1660. Social historians

have also noted the impact of growing wealth and diverse migration on the colony. The war, however, was one of the most public spectacles of colonial conflict and distress, and it that threw into relief some of the most fundamental splits in the identity of dissenting Protestant groups living at the margins of empire.

Into a historical context as unstable for identities as we have seen, not only wars but also wonders continued to be observed, remarked, shared, and recorded. They did not, certainly, singularly *result* from a problem like the war publications. War itself was not a wonder. But war was often the occasion for noticing and writing about wonders, and for setting the new world off against the old in more subtle ways than the opposition between the English and Spanish could do. Perhaps the most influential example of how wonders could get used during wartime was the way English theologians interpreted the most important wonder of the sixteenth century—the destruction of the Spanish Armada in a massive sea storm as it prepared to wage war on England. Similarly in New England, the war gave rise to individuals' narratives of their experiences in Indian captivity, a form that influenced the entire captivity genre of wonder writings.[82] It also produced an atmosphere in which the observation of wonders in new worlds took on immediate political significance and was undertaken by an even wider number of people than usual.[83] The war created the pressing need for colonists to interpret their American

[82] Personal captivity narratives, which went on to become one of the most influential narrative forms to emerge from early colonial America, were filled with wonders and remarkables, as former captives recorded aspects of their experiences that they considered shocking, unexplainable, and either preter- or supernatural in cause. See Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola and James Arthur Levernier, *The Indian Captivity Narrative, 1550-1900* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1993).

[83] In almanacs, wondrous events associated with the war became entries in the yearly calendars. See Hall, *Worlds of Wonder*, 72, 81-83; and Lepore, *Name of War*, 173-90.

experience, especially as this experience reflected on the nature of their own community, its source in England, and its identity as fuller dissent in the colonies.

More generally, however, wonder writings—as an established set of discourses for both understanding the "new" world and also recording its "matters of fact" natural, legal, or civil—became a powerful rhetorical means for projecting a stronger identity for the colonists. Wonders had already been identified by members of the Royal Society as the most valuable type of phenomena occurring at the edges of the known world, the kind that natural historians ought to record (rather than wars) and that, as facts of creation, could point to revelation and truth. The rhetorical forms for such facts, moreover, had begun to be regularized as writers of law, history, natural history, and journalism sought reliable documentary means to verify important "matters of fact." No wonder, then, that the colonists utilized what were quickly becoming privileged rhetorical procedures for establishing the truth of history and phenomena in the new world—a privilege that would have proved beneficial in rewriting colonists' self-representation of their community and activities in America.

Moreover, as colonial writers sought to take up the kinds of writing that Hubbard would have deemed real "history," they turned increasingly to wonder texts rather than to war texts, I believe, to differentiate themselves from an England that was, in its imperial practices, rapidly becoming more like the Spain of the Black Legend. Filled with violence and drama, wonder narratives benefited from the same sensational appeal as the war accounts, but carried an entirely different religious and political tenor. Like the war reports—and in stark contrast to the abstract theological treatises, religio-political

disputations, and didactic poetry that characterized most other colonial publications—they featured the activities of common colonists out in the American world. Yet the narratives set those experiences in a framework of spiritual and natural discovery instead of the war report's framework of secular fighting over land. Colonists thus made use of the broader popular appeal of narratives like those coming out of the war, but used the public's fascination domestically and in England to gain a voice for themselves, to be political without necessarily being polemical.

Before taking up these wonder writings, however, it is important to grasp in more detail the rhetorical challenge (legal, moral, and representational) faced by the colonists in their negotiations with the crown and the transnational Protestant movement. The next chapter thus peers more closely into the emerging legal and philosophical rhetoric used by European thinkers to organize the relationship between colonies and the mother country and justify colonization in the Americas.

Chapter 2: The Case for Colonial Rhetorical Studies

> A little before our coming, God had by pestilence, and other contagious diseases, swept away many thousands of the Natives, who had inhabited the Bay of Massachusetts, for which the Patent was granted. Such few of them as survived were glad of the coming of the English, who might preserve them from the oppression of the Nahargansets.
>
> — John Cotton, *Reply to Mr. Williams*, 1647

Histories of Rhetorics

Beneath New England wonder writings and war reports lay practical matters that affected how these texts were understood, including what they implied about the colony's international legitimacy and social identity. Using King Philip's war as a case study, I have tried to show how important it was for New England colonists to project self-representations that would shore up, rather than fracture, colonists' public political identity as legitimate and godly. The war writings clarify this challenge by bringing to light particular issues the colonists faced: their need to project a unified, rather than divisive and sectarian, front; the importance of characterizing their relationship to native peoples as harmonious and helpful in intent, rather than exploitative and rapacious; the need to emphasize their use of American lands for church- and community-building, rather than for aggressive profit-making; and the importance of projecting themselves as pious, cohesive, and humble English men and women, rather than power-hungry and disorderly dissenting commoners in need of the crown's discipline.

To further clarify these rhetorical challenges, we turn now to the sources that fundamentally structured colonial discourses about legitimacy and identity. Although

numerous scholars have examined the economies, institutional structures, and political formations of early modern European empires in the Americas, few have focused on the period's theoretically complex, international philosophical and juridical debates about the nature and purpose of empire. In the late 1980s, Anthony Pagden, J. G. A. Pocock, David Armitage, Richard Tuck, and a few other historians began to pursue the enormous impact of such debates on "European political thinking" from the vantage of intellectual history. To do so, they engaged in a kind of analysis that, in other quarters, was beginning to be identified as a breed of "new" historicism. They began, that is, to consider "the interdependence of the propositional content of an argument and the language, the discourse, in which it is made" and to take more seriously, "to borrow a term from Hobbes, [the] 'registers' in which specific kinds of propositions may intelligibly be cast."[1] That is, they focused not just on the political ideas developed by these philosophers, but also on their *rhetoric* and its influence. In J. G. A. Pocock's words, "we are to be concerned with idioms, rhetorics, specialised vocabularies and grammars, modes of discourse or ways of talking about politics which have been created and diffused, but, far more importantly, employed in the political discourse of early-modern Europe."[2]

In Europeans' arguments about empire, "specialised vocabularies" included key terms that came to be valued (such as land "improvement") or devalued (such as "conquest"). "Rhetorics" encompassed a range of strategies for argumentation and

[1] Anthony Pagden, "Introduction," in *The Languages of Political Theory in Early-Modern Europe*, ed. Anthony Pagden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 1-18.

[2] J. G. A. Pocock, "The Concept of a Language and the *Métièr d'Historien*: Some Considerations on Practice," in *The Languages of Political Theory in Early-Modern Europe*, 21.

representation, such as presenting Spanish conquest of American natives as a "just war" in defense of a European way of life, or presenting England's imperialism as the rescue of Indians from paganism and the Spanish. Written "idioms" included preferred images of European settlements, such as the image of Mexico's Indians gratefully submitting themselves to Cortes, or of New Englanders profitably, piously, and peacefully cultivating uninhabited American soil. Viewing these philosophers' and jurists' writings as competing rhetorics in a language game, rather than as universally accepted beliefs, enables us to view any particular argument in this context "as a good deal less of a *mentalité* and a good deal more of a [rhetorical] move," in Pocock's words. By adjusting our perspective, an individual such as the Lord Chief Justice of England, Sir Edward Coke—or any other widely read jurist, philosopher, or politician—appears as "less the mouthpiece through which a *mentalité* articulated itself than a powerful advocate and successful pleader, employing speech, pen and print to induce his hearers and readers to adopt a position to which they were no doubt in many ways predisposed . .. but to which they knew . . . that an alternative could be alleged."[3]

Following the lead of Pagden, Pocock and others, I, too, turn to early modern politico-philosophical arguments out of a rhetorical interest in the influence of their "idioms," or their "language of empire." Within this perspective, I, too, consider these philosophical debates as rhetorical attempts to manage problems of imperial legitimacy in a period when Europeans had not yet worked out agreed-upon mechanisms for establishing the legality of colonization and trade in American territories and waters. Yet

[3] Pocock, "The Concept of a Language," 28.

unlike these intellectual historians, I ultimately pursue such idioms in order to explain the rhetoric of other, less philosophical writings: in particular, New Englanders' histories and written representations of their colony. As Pocock has argued in his defense of "the concept of a language," such work necessarily must consider how available languages get *used* by different writers. The languages of political philosophy, he noted, often find their way out of the hands of the philosophers and jurists and into the hands of various "laities," who "have appropriated professional idioms to unprofessional purposes, have employed idioms from other sources in such a way as to modify their effects, or have developed rhetorics of hostility to the imposition of language upon them."[4] As I argue elsewhere in this project, such "laities" were sometimes quite sophisticated themselves. New England colonists Roger Williams and John Cotton, discussed later in this chapter, were not jurists or political philosophers, though Williams had studied under Coke. Yet both were highly esteemed English intellectuals in clear command of available and recognizably competing discourses about how to legitimate European empire in the Americas. Leading colonists knew the terms of transnational debates that affected them, even if they could not always agree on a position within them.

In conjunction with knowledge of colonial writers' religious goals and scientific aspirations, therefore, understanding these political idioms provides a key to demystifying writings about the colonies—written from within or without. Such a perspective can clarify writers' choices of subject matters, tone, vocabulary, and formal structures, and make visible the broader meanings these choices would have produced.

[4] Pocock, "The Concept of a Language," 24.

Ultimately, historical-theoretical texts can thus demonstrate the profit of reading wonder writings not as a pure literature or as bare history but as polemical rhetoric written within the established parameters of what counted as persuasive argumentation.

We begin by surveying two arenas of international debate: first, Europeans' arguments about how to legitimately claim rights to American territories; and second, arguments about the proper relationship between a colony and its metropolis. With these frameworks in place, we then consider a specific case when colonial writers themselves argued about the best rhetorical means to underwrite their project, and spelled out what they saw as the potential consequences for adopting certain rhetorical strategies over others. Finally, we discuss how these rhetorics of empire shaped the colonists' identity representations in other writings.

Claiming the Land

> But some will say, what right have I to go live in the heathens' country?
>
> Letting pass the ancient discoveries, contracts and agreements which our Englishmen have long since made in those parts . . . this then is a sufficient reason to prove our going thither to live lawful: their land is spacious and void, and there are few and do but run over the grass, as do also the foxes and wild beasts. They are not industrious, neither have art, science, skill or faculty to use either the land or the commodities of it, but all spoils, rots, and is marred for want of manuring, gathering, ordering, etc. . . .
>
> Secondly . . . the emperor, by a joint consent, hath promised and appointed us to live at peace where we will in all his dominions . . . for these two causes. First, because we are the servants of James, King of England, whose the land (as he confesseth) is; second, because he hath found us just, honest, kind and peaceable, and so loves our company.
>
> —R. C., "Reasons and Considerations touching the lawfulness of removing out of England into the parts of America," Plymouth, 1622

Over the course of the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries, writers in Spain, Portugual, England, France, and the Netherlands developed complex, multiple, and contradictory arguments regarding their American empires. They argued about what the purpose of empire ought to be, how a country could legally lay claim to new territories, what the relationship between a colony and its metropolis should be, when expansion should stop and how, and even how colonies ought to be administered. Throughout, their arguments drew heavily on Roman and Greek imperial precedents and on established canon and civil law.[5] At the same time, their discussions spoke not just to the legal basis of overseas ventures but also to the nascent national identities the major European states were beginning to develop. As everyone recognized at the time, competition between the three Atlantic powers (Spain, England, and France) over exploration, conquest, colonization, and American spoils provided a powerful and public site for constructing national identities in contrast to one another.[6]

Although New England has sometimes been studied by American historians as a thing unto itself —uniquely "American" from its very beginnings—it, too, was part of

[5] See David Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Anthony Pagden, *Lords of All the World,* 1-28; and Richard Tuck, *The Rights of War and Peace: Political Thought and the International Order from Grotius to Kant* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999). Throughout this section and the next, I am deeply indebted to the work of these three scholars.

[6] For extended discussions of how American colonization shaped England's national identity construction, see Scanlan, *Colonial Writing and the New World;* Bach, *Colonial Transformations;* Elizabeth Mancke, "Empire and State," in *The British Atlantic World, 1500-1800*, ed. David Armitage and Michael J. Braddick (New York: Palgrave, 2002); and David Armitage, *Ideological Origins*. For a comparative perspective, see the essays on identity formation in Brazil, Spanish America, Nouvelle-France/Quebec/Canada, British America, Ireland, and the British Caribbean, in *Colonial Identity in the Atlantic World, 1500-1800*, ed. Nicholas Canny and Anthony Pagden (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1987).

this unwieldy international scene. Indeed, it figured prominently in England's defense of its empire. Eventually, New England came to serve as a key symbol differentiating England's approach from Spain's. As discussed in the previous chapter, New England's Indian policies could be favorably contrasted with Spain's, at least most of the time. Writings about "the black legend" of Spain's atrocities—and as I will elaborate further in this chapter, about what Europeans' rights and obligations towards Indians were in general—underlay those representations of English settlements. New England's religious identity and missionary goals were also used to defend England's imperial activities and to differentiate the country from Catholic France and Spain, as will be discussed further in chapter 3. In a similar way, two other key issues also structured representations of the colonies and England. In this section, I briefly discuss each, beginning with the first—the colonists' relationship to the land of America. As with King Philip's War, this rhetoric for colonists' portrayal of their group identity provided opportunities to represent their strongest face in uncertain political times.

The "agriculturalist argument," or the argument from *vacuum domicilium*, formed a central and recurrent theme in English jurists' and philosophers' justifications for American empire. In the beginning, the records affirm, everybody wanted conquest and gold, not farming and trade, from their American possessions. In imitation of the *conquistadores*, Englishmen such as Martin Frobisher and Walter Raleigh searched for kingdoms to conquer and precious minerals to mine with the approval and support of the

English crown.[7] On behalf of the French, Jacques Cartier sought conquest and gold.[8] But by sheer historical accident, it was only Spain and Portugal that landed in gold- and silver-glutted areas, and only they had found Indian civilizations of the appropriate organization to be conquered and organized into a massive labor force for mining. Conquest and gold digging simply were not options for the English or French. It did not take either country very long, however, to turn their historical grapes into rhetorical wine, especially once it became apparent in the seventeenth century that Spain's reliance upon, indeed utter dependence upon, specie mining and Indian labor had prevented them from developing their colonies in sustainable ways.

What emerged against Spain's medieval language of arms, valor, and conquest was a righteous counter-rhetoric of agriculture, community, and commerce that claimed these features of English colonialism as its primary strengths, as positive reflectors of English character, and as arguments for legal legitimacy. Key to this rhetoric were arguments that English colonists were "improving" the land by clearing it, farming it, and building on it rather than destroying it (as had the Spanish) or leaving it idle (as, they usually argued, had the natives).[9] This land, they argued, was theirs by right of the law of

[7] For examples of English writings celebrating America's gold and conquerable nations, see the epic poem of George Chapman, "De Guiana carmen epicum." prefixed to Lawrence Kemys, *A relation of the second voyage to Guiana* (London, 1596); and Walter Raleigh, *The Discoverie of the Large, Rich and Bewtiful Empire of Guiana, with a Relation of the Great and Golden City of Manoa (which the Spaniards call El Dorado) and the prouinces of Emeria, Arromaia and other Countries, with their Riuers, Adoiyning* (London, 1596); reprint ed. Roberg H. Schomberg for Hakluyt Society, 1848; reprint (New York: Lenox Hill, 1970).

[8] H. P. Biggar, *A Collection of Documents Relating to Jacques Cartier and the Sieur de Roberval* (Ottawa: Publications of the Public Archives of Canada. No. 14, 1930), 128.

[9] According to historian Jack P. Greene, "The language of improvement was ubiquitous in the early-modern British world." On the broader implications of this term for colonial identity construction, see Greene, "Changing Identity in the British Caribbean: Barbados as a Case Study," in *Colonial Identity in the*

res nullius or *vacuum domicilium*. That is, they had settled on an "empty thing" (*res nullius*) rather than conquering and thus stealing occupied land from rightful inhabitants, since the Indians sparsely populated the settlement area (at least in New England) and had not, in English views, made adequate use of the land by building on it or extensively farming it. As Francis Bacon wrote, "I like a *Plantation* in a pure soil; that is where People are not displanted to the end, to Plant others. For else it is rather an Extirpation than a Plantation."[10] By ancient Roman law, empty places would belong to whomever first could improve them profitably. "Improvement" of the land through labor could thus manufacture property rights out of sweat and industry. After years of its wide use by jurists, propagandists, and colonists, John Locke set forth this argument definitively in his *Second Treatise on Government* (1690), stating that a man acquired property rights only when he "mixed his Labour with; and joined to it something that is his own."[11] New England colonists, much-touted for their competence in husbandry, community organization, and commerce, benefited significantly from this emergent language of agriculture and improvement. Moreover, as historian John H. Elliott observes, the language of improvement created a "sense of being engaged in a civilizing mission," which in turn "was a potent element in creating a corporate sense of identity among

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Atlantic World, esp. 229-41. On the historical origins of the argument by *vacuum domicilium* or *res nullius*, see Richard Tuck, *The Rights of War and Peace,* esp. 47-50. In a slightly different vein, Joyce E. Chaplin discusses how the rhetoric of improvement enabled colonists to differentiate themselves from Indians. Chaplin, *Subject Matter*, 201-42.

[10] Francis Bacon, "Of Plantations."

[11] John Locke, *Locke's Two Treatises of Government*, ed. Peter Laslett, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 306.

settler societies which found themselves consistently misunderstood and abused by their European critics."[12]

This emphasis on building permanent "improvements" in America contributed to New England's legitimation in another way. A valorization of agriculture and land improvement consequently made the English prone to characterize their colonies as "plantations" as opposed to Spain's "kingdoms of the Indies." "Plantation" not only escaped Europeans' increasing censure of the language of conquest; the permanent-sounding term also worked well with another type of legal claim—right by prescription. In the end, argues Anthony Pagden, legal scholars all agreed that "few if any European titles for original settlement in America would stand much careful scrutiny." After a certain amount of time had passed, however, one did not have to assert the legality of the original settlement. One could, instead, simply refer to the continuing fact of its existence. Whether original claims were just or unjust, in the end, they could only be sustained by continuous occupation, and this was itself a legal argument with ancient precedent. "The Roman law of prescription," Pagden argues, "allowed for long-term *de facto* occupation of a particular thing (*praescriptio longi temporis*) to be recognized *de iure* as a case of *dominium.*"[13] Anyone who occupied a tract of land long enough could claim both settlement rights and dominion over the territory. In this light, New Englanders' focus on building towns and harbors, enlarging their permanent population, spreading out and clearing more land for farms, and establishing a stable and strong local

[12] John H. Elliott, "Introduction: Colonial Identity in the Atlantic World," in *Colonial Identity in the Atlantic World*, 11.

[13] Pagden, *Lords of All the World*, 89.

government, took on another meaning: they had come to stay. According to their portrayal of their settlements, they were actively and fully occupying their lands, rather than merely "discovering" but never fully inhabiting large tracts of claimed territories, as had the Spanish. (Of course, the practice of claiming territories never even seen by "discoverers" was common to all the European powers). Discovery, in the end, did not count unless both property rights and sovereignty were *exercised* by living on the land.[14] Permanence was itself a virtue.

With all of these legal arguments in place, English jurists could rely on one more, showing that in places that had been settled, English colonists purchased their land by deed from Indians, rather than wresting it away through conquest. In 1721, Jeremiah Dummer would argue that Europeans could have in American lands "no other right than that in which the honest New-England planters rely on having purchased it with their money. The Indian title, therefore, as much as it is decry'd and undervalued here, seems the only fair and just one."[15] New England, again, could be used to represent everything that was right about England's approach to imperialism in the Atlantic, a maneuver that identified the best aspects of the English colonies with the English national character itself.

Although the rhetoric of agriculture and improvement proved a valuable tool for colonists' construction of a legitimate identity, these arguments were not universally persuasive. More particular observers might begin to note their internal contradictions. For example, if the colonists had their land truly by law of *vacuum domicilium*, then they

[14] Pagden, *Lords of All the World*, 82.

[15] Jeremiah Dummer, *A Defence of the New-England Charters* (London, 1721), 14.

should never have needed to buy it. Conversely, in order for the natives to legally sell it, they must have had right to it in the first place. "By what right," asked Robert Gray in 1609, "or warrant can we enter into the land of these Savages, take away their rightfull inheritance from them, and plant our selves in their places, being unwronged or unprouoked by them?" He dismisses the question outright:

> there is no intendment to take away from them by force that rightfull inheritance which they haue in that Countrey, for they are willing to entertaine us, and haue offered to yoelde into our handes on reasonable conditions, more lande then we shall boe able thus long time to plant and manure: and out of all question uppon easie composition with them, wee may haue as much of their Countrey yeelded unto us, by lawfull grannt from them, as we can or will desire.[16]

Here Gray assumes that the lands are inhabited, that the inhabitants have a right to them, and that they thus have the right to dispose of them (primarily, by selling them) as they please. Yet at the same time, Francis Higginson and John Winthrop in New England were taking the opposite tack, arguing against the Indians' rights to the lands and asserting their own rights by means of the law of *vacuum domicilium*. Higginson would claim that "The Indians are not able to make use of the one fourth part of the land; neither have they any settled places, as towns, to dwell in; nor any ground as they challenge for their own possession, but change their habitation from place to place."[17] Similarly, Winthrop would argue that the Indians could not own (and by implication, could not sell or deed) land,

[16] Gray, *A Good Speede to Virginia*.

[17] Francis Higginson, *New England's Plantation* (London, 1630).

"for they inclose no ground, neither have they cattell to maintayne it, but remove their dwellings as they have occasion."[18] In turn, Winthrop's willingness to claim land by right of *vacuum domicilium* in 1633 directly contradicted his actions in 1642, when he cheaply purchased 1,260 Indian-held acres, a contradiction that led historian Francis Jennings to dismiss Europeans' purchase of land deeds as a mere "deed game."[19]

On other grounds, some might object that no one had ever been able to agree on what constituted "first discovery" of a place—the necessary precondition to a claim by *vacuum domicilium*—since it could hardly be true, said some, that one could claim a continent simply by sailing past it. Furthermore, others noted that, while New England's native peoples had lost many of their number to disease prior to the 1620 Mayflower landing or 1630 Massachusetts Bay migration, Virginia had always had plenty of inhabitants, and so had never been a *res nullius*. Indeed, even New England still held a good number of native inhabitants, as Philip and his warriors made clear. Others might argue that, whatever their later emphasis on agriculture and peaceable "plantations" rather than "conquest," the colonists in Massachusetts Bay had not been shy of characterizing their territories obtained from the Pequots, through the "great mercy" of God, as being gotten "by iust title of conquest."[20]

Naysayers did not merely emerge from the political margins. In 1705, England's Privy Council decided against Connecticut Colony and in favor of the Mohegans,

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[18] Allyn B. Forbes et al., eds., *Winthrop Papers, 1598-1649,* 5 vols. (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1929-47) 2: 120.

[19] Francis Jennings, *The Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest* (New York: Norton, 1976), 128-45.

[20] *Records of Massachusetts Bay*, 1: 216.

acknowledging that the Mohegan people were, indeed, a sovereign nation and could not be deprived of their lands on the grounds that they had no civil government or any of the "circumstances essential to the existence of a state."[21] Indeed, it was 1667 before Spain acknowledged, in the Treaty of Madrid, that the English had *any* legitimate claims to the lands that the Pope had in 1493 and 1494 expressly donated to Spain.[22] Clearly, the rhetoric of agriculture and *vacuum domicilium* was not universally persuasive or equivalent to the overall *mentalité* of the period. To see this disagreement requires us to give up a commonly held notion that all Europeans agreed about the legitimacy of American settlements and that the primary fault lines of disagreement lay between Europeans and non-Europeans. Quite the reverse, states historian Elizabeth Mancke: "Confronting Iberian claims, [Europeans] paid little heed to grappling with the rights of native peoples. Rather, the English, French, and Dutch concentrated on establishing their claims vis-à-vis other Europeans. All Europeans excluded non-European claims from multinational negotiations."[23] Mancke's argument rings true except, clearly, when non-European claims could be used to support European claims, such as when Englishmen cited the rights of Indians in order to condemn the Spanish in Mexico, or when they cited their Indian land purchases and deeds as legitimating them against Dutch claims. In the end, the strongest arguments in support of the colonies required the *idea* of Indians but,

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[21] J. H. Smith, *Appeals to the Privy Council from the American Plantations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1950), 434, 417-22.

[22] "Treaty of Peace, Alliance, and Commerce between Spain and Great Britain, Concluded at Madrid, May 23,1667, N. S." in *European Treaties Bearing on the History of the United States and its Dependencies*, ed. Frances Gardiner Davenport, vol. 3 (Washington, D. C.: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1929), 94-109.

[23] Elizabeth Mancke, "Empire and State," 180.

for the most part, emphasized their absence (creating a *vacuum domicilium*) or nonactivity (their failure to "improve" the land). In contrast, English self-legitimation primarily focused on agriculture, improvement, settlement, and peacableness, and these arguments often relied on the New England colonies as representative cases.

Thus far we have focused on the explicit usage in legal defenses of agricultural "improvement" and community-building rhetorics. However, as I will demonstrate in subsequent chapters, these "idioms" made their way into other arenas of colonial speech, as well. We can catch an early glimpse of this migration in a 1657 sermon by the famous New England minister, Richard Mather. When Mather exhorted his parishioners to join religious devotion to "your buying & selling, your plowing and howing, your sowing & mowing and reaping, your feeding cattle and keeping sheep, your planting orchards & gardens, your baking and brewing, your building houses or outhouses, your fencing in ground or other business what ever," we recognize these activities as key terms in a rhetoric of "improvement." Mather, in turn, ultimately argues that "fencing in ground" or "planting orchards & gardens" can become one and the same with fulfilling one's religious duty—as "so many acts of Religion and Obedience towards God." In this sermon, he thus speaks not merely as a preacher advising pious living, but also as a colonist incorporating a key rhetoric of political legitimacy into the colonists' more pious tongue.[24] Rhetoric about coming to America to worship God and establish the true Church thus could be combined seamlessly with a rhetoric of legal legitimacy reliant on agriculture and land improvement.

[24] Richard Mather, *A Farewel Exhortation to the Church and people of Dorchester* (Cambridge, 1657), 11-12, 17.

Because this primarily legal rhetoric proved so amenable to the colonists' religious notions of their mission in America, it could also be used to help characterize their identity. As we saw earlier, contrasting their actions against the Spaniards' Indian policies served as a means for portraying the English as *benevolent*. Focusing on their permanent establishment of towns, farms, churches and harbors helped to establish them socially as a *communitarian*, rather than as an exploitative, temporary, and primarily administrative, colony. Their repeated insistence that they had planted in sparsely settled areas enabled them to skirt the international disapproval of conquest and lay claim to legal legitimacy through more respectable means. And of course, the language of "improvement" enabled them to characterize themselves as good *stewards* of American soil, space, water, and opportunities, connected to the land through their own holy sweat, in "so many acts of Religion and Obedience towards God."

Colony and Metropolis

> And wee doe further, for us, our heires and successors, give and graunt to the said Governor and Company . . . That all and everie such cheife commaunders, captaines, governors, and other officers and ministers . . . shall . . . have full and absolute power and authoritie to correct, punishe, pardon, governe, and rule all such the subjectes of us, our heires and successors . . . within the precincts and partes of Newe England aforesaid, according to the orders, lawes, ordinances, instructions, and directions aforesaid, not being repugnant to the lawes and statues of our realme of England.
>
> —King Charles I, *Charter of the Colony of the Massachusetts Bay, 1630*

A second legal and philosophical discourse arose around the colonies' relationships to their metropoles. The relative independence of the British colonies from the metropolis formed a key refrain both in metropolitan self-characterizations and in the colonists' presentation of themselves as a new, different version of England.

Unlike Spain's ventures in the Americas, Britain's colonies were originally granted patents that were essentially equivalent to the charters given private companies for international trade. This arrangement set up the colonies and the companies that funded them as private, and thus largely independent, ventures. This identification as private agents, rather than as imperial invaders, fortified the colonists' self-characterization as "planters." As Pagden notes, "In their historiography, the original English settlers had not only been private persons acting of their own volition and employing their own capital. They had also, because of this, gone to America not to conquer, as their neighbours had; they had gone to 'plant' and they had 'improved'. They had not gone to perpetuate a European society already corrupted by the absolutist (and 'continental') ambitions of the Stuart monarchy; they had gone to build a new, more righteous, and ultimately republican" community.[25]

Insisting upon the colonies' independence, however, could lead to a kind of legal contradiction. Characterizing British colonies as private, independent ventures allowed English jurists to view their empire as following Greek rather than Roman models—as a protectorate of several interests rather than a universal state, according to David

[25] Pagden, *Lords of All the World*, 128.

Armitage.[26] The Athenians, when establishing their colonies, had set up polities defined as "perfect communities"—independent states under the jurisdiction of a single prince. In contrast, Spain had set up an arrangement more closely related to the model of Rome—an empire based on conquest and the lording of *imperium* over conquered territories and peoples. Historians agree that these different theoretical models may not have accurately matched up with the reality on the ground in America, yet the rhetoric nevertheless entailed real consequences. In the Greek model, for example, such communities held unlimited rights of self-determination. Claiming and exercising self-determination was a key goal of colonists, especially in New England, which attempted to structure itself on laws and principles quite different from those operating in England. New England's claim to be a new, reformed England depended upon these rights.

Difficulties could arise with the comparison to Greek empire, however. Most British colonies claimed their rights not merely by comparing themselves to Greek "perfect communities," but through their charters. The charters themselves spelled out how the colonies could claim so much independence. They granted it by explicit declaration of the king. The British colonies in America were established as parts of the king's prerogative. They were thus set up under the larger umbrella of the crown's authority, but as being distinct from the realm of England (and thus, Parliament). That is to say, the colonists' claim to self-determination thus rested not merely on the rights enumerated in the charter, but also on the relationship between the metropolis and the colony which it articulated. This arrangement, in turn, established the colonies not as

[26] See Armitage, *Ideological Origins,* and Tuck, *Rights of War and Peace*.

independent states but as dependent feudatories under the crown, originally granted in 'free and common socage as of the manor of East Greenwich in Kent." [27] A feudatory was a far cry from an independent and "perfect" Greek state.

Although a kind of feudal relationship to the king would offer less autonomy than a Greek "perfect community," claiming this status became a powerful rhetorical move for the colonists in other ways. In particular, it freed them from Parliamentary control while establishing colonial leaders as feudal "lords" of a sort—as the local faces of the king. Various historians have noted that the relationship between colony and crown was structured along the lines of lordship and vassalage, not those of the proto-democracy that historians have often sought to find in the early records.[28] Many, like Francis Jennings, cite the importance of Coke's arguments in the notorious *Calvin's Case* (1608) for establishing colonial governments as local lords. In this important argument, Jennings notes: "Sir Edward Coke reached back to medieval precedent to define the colonies as dominions of the king, distinct from the realm. The practical effect of *Calvin's Case* was to assure that these dominions would be supervised by the Privy Council instead of Parliament" and furthermore, "the crown lawyers explicitly stated their understanding of the status of colonial governments as that of lordship."[29] Some considered Coke's

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[27] *The Charter of the Colony of the Massachusetts Bay in New England. 1628-9,* in *Records of Massachusetts Bay*, vol 1, 3-4.

[28] On this feudal dimension of the British colonies, see Ian K. Steele, "The British Parliament and the Atlantic Colonies to 1760: New Approaches to Enduring Questions," in *Parliament and the Atlantic Empire,* ed. Philip Lawson (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press for the Parliamentary History Yearbook Trust, 1995), 29-46; Jennings, *Invasion of America,* 105-27; and Pagden, *Lords of All the World*, 126-55,

[29] Jennings, *Invasion of America,* 107. See also Louise Phelps Kellogg, "The American Colonial Charter: A Study of English Administration in Relation Thereto, Chiefly After 1688," in American Historical Association, *Annual Report* (Washington, D. C.: 1903), 191-229.

argument to be ridiculous,[30] but the charter itself had presented the metropolis-colony relationship in terms of lordship and vassalage, and as we will see, colonists were prepared to employ this language for their own ends.

In particular, their standard argument would assert that colonial governments became agents of the king. Although they were below the king on the vertical chain of power, their status within their local domain, as holders of a feudatory, would have been equivalent to the king's. The Massachusetts charter made the nature of the relationship clear.

> And wee doe further, for us, our heires and successors, give and graunt to the said Governor and Company, and their successors, by theis presentes, That all and everie such cheife commaunders, captaines, governors, and other officers and ministers . . . shall . . . have full and absolute power and authoritie to correct, punishe, pardon, governe, and rule all such the subjectes of us, our heires and successors, as shall from tyme to tyme adventure themselves in any voyadge thither or from thence, or that shall at any tyme hereafter inhabite within the precincts and partes of Newe England aforesaid, according to the orders, lawes, ordinances, instructions, and directions aforesaid, not being repugnant to the lawes and statues of our realme of England, as aforesaid.

Immediately thereafter, and in addition to these "full and absolute power[s]," the charter grants similarly sweeping powers "to incounter, expulse, repell, and resist by force of

[30] On the subsequent wrangling over *Calvin's Case*, see Jack P. Greene, *Peripheries and Center,* esp. 23-24.

armes, as well by sea as by lande, and by all fitting waies and meanes whatsoever, all such person and persons as shall at any tyme hereafter attempt or enterprise the destruction, invasion, detriment, or annoyaunce to the said plantation or inhabitants."[31] These powers and liberties, only a few of the many outlined by the charter, granted immense autonomy to colonial governments.

Conceiving of colonial governments as endowed with the status and powers of local lords characterized English colonial settlements in a firmly communitarian way as *equal* to England. The colonies' political and social center thus did not lie across the ocean, but stood within their own colonies' bounds. This model legitimized a Protestant politico-social ideal that sought a model of community not as individualistic as presbyterianism, and not as centralized and hierarchical as Catholicism. The freeman's forced participation in the community, as well as the General Court's numerous laws governing minute and intimate aspects of individuals' behaviors within the community, fortified the legal structure of colonial settlements. This insistence upon a communitarian model, as we shall see below, was a consistent theological point for the colonists throughout the life of the colony, and its close fit with the vassalage and "perfect community" models became a source of political legitimacy for the colony.

We cannot simply assume that Sir Edward Coke's language of crown prerogative and feudal rights was persuasive. In one significant way, the colonies could not be considered feudatories at all. Because the charters spelled out such extensive rights to self-determination, they essentially freed the colonists from the crown's authority as well

[31] *Charter of the Colony of the Massachusetts Bay* in *Records of Massachusetts Bay*, vol 1, 17-18.

as Parliament's. Although technically their grant as "free and common socage after the manor of east Greenwich" established them as feudatories (which meant they could not legally purchase land from Indians, because such an activity would fall under jurisdiction of Parliament), the language of the charters themselves granted colonists rights to self-legislation, which could be seen as negating feudal obligations to king. As a result, as one historian has noted, "The American claim that the origin of the colonies had been in a concession granted by the king of England, could be so represented as to eliminate all legal ties between the colonies and the metropolis."[32] This contradiction posed potential problems for the colonies and would take sharp form during the eighteenth century. Nevertheless, during the seventeenth century, the multiple rhetorical idioms enriched the language available to colonists for characterizing and defending their independence as self-governed communities pursuing a distinct group vision. While useful for the New England colonists, who wished to set up a society according to their own rules, philosophers and jurists in England also found this rhetoric useful for characterizing England as a Greek, rather than Roman, empire—indeed, as not really being an empire at all. The colonies' independence was, in England's ongoing characterizations of itself as a better country than Spain, a source of pride. Only in 1670s did the crown actively begin to reign in colonial independence.

Comparing these rhetorical arguments to the historical record, we see that none of them accurately explains the relationship between British colonies and the metropolis. In real terms, these rights and relationships were clear as mud. In a recent essay, historian

[32] Pagden, *Lords of All the World*, 141.

Ian K. Steele has shown how historians over the past two hundred years have remained unable to agree on what arrangements actually governed the colony's relationship to the crown and Parliament. [33] The confusion persists today. Citing the charter was useful to the colonists for establishing their communitarian goals, and it was useful to English jurists and the crown for establishing the identity of their empire, but it was powerful as *rhetoric*, rather than as an accurate reflection of the legal or political reality.

Thus far we have viewed the jurists' arguments in their abstract forms. To begin to connect these rhetorics more concretely to colonial writings, it is helpful now to examine an episode when Massachusetts' colonial leaders themselves explicitly argued with one another about some of the key legitimacy and identity rhetorics I have outlined in the previous two sections. After Roger Williams' famous banishment from the Massachusetts Bay Colony as a dangerous radical, John Cotton argued intensively with him about the two key reasons for the banishment: Williams's claim that the colony's charter was false and unjust, and his refusal to swear the oath of fidelity to the colony. While historians have generally focused on Williams' arguments for liberty of conscience or his heretically strict separatism, Cotton and Williams both affirmed that the primary reasons for his banishment were, at least technically, his challenge of these two key devices of colonial legitimacy. Their printed debate, which Cotton concluded in 1647, reveals these leading colonists' own understanding of the rhetorical strategies by which the colonies could stand as legitimate before England, other countries, and God.

[33] Steele, "The British Parliament and the Atlantic Colonies to 1760."

The "Fundamentall State, and Government of the Countrey": John Cotton vs. Roger Williams

According to John Cotton's 1647 *Reply to Mr. Williams*, Roger Williams was banished from the Massachusetts Bay Colony into the cold American winter of 1635/36 not for insisting upon freedom of religion, as is so commonly believed, but for two quite different reasons. First, he was banished for "His violent and tumultuous carriage against the Patent." Second, the General Court of the Massachusetts Bay colony attempted to "take tryall of the fidelitie of the People . . . by offering to them an Oath of Fidelitie: that in case any should refuse to take it, they might not betrust them with the place of publick charge, and Command." But "this Oath when it came abroad, he vehemently withstood it, and disswaded sundry from it." Thus Williams' condemnation of the colony's charter as legally invalid, and his refusal to swear the oath of fidelity (later known as the "Oath of a Freeman") were the chief causes of his banishment.[34]

Williams' controversy with New England primarily centered, all agree, on the religious issue of whether a saved person should be allowed to join with unsaved persons in religious practices. His extreme form of separatism answered this question with a vehement negative. But Cotton and the magistrates clearly considered other matters—Williams' "carriage against the Patent" and against the Oath—to be such serious threats to the community as to warrant banishment and public condemnation.

What had Williams "carried" against the Patent and Oath? According to Williams, he had argued "that the Natives are the true owners of [our Land] and that we ought to

[34] John Cotton, "A Reply to Mr. VVilliams his Examination; And Answer of the letters sent to him by John Cotton" published with *The Bloudy Tenent Washed* (London, 1647), 27, 29.

repent of such a receiving it by Pattent."[35] Cotton specified more fully what he saw as the dangers of Williams' opinions: "This Patent, Mr. Williams publickly, and vehemently preached against, as containing matter of falshood, and injustice: Falshood in making the King the first Christian Prince who had discovered these parts"—Williams here disputes the claim to discovery that, as we saw earlier, had to be in place before one could claim right of *vacuum domicilium*—"and injustice, in giving the Countrye to his English Subjects, which belonged to the Native Indians. This therefore he pressed upon the Magistrates and People . . . to return the Patent back againe to the King."[36]

Although Cotton would devote by far the majority of his argument to theological matters, he felt compelled to respond to the civil question in high tones,

> By the Patent it is that we received allowance from the King to depart his Kingdome, and to carry our goods with us, without offence to his Officers, and without paying custome to himselfe.
>
> By the Patent, certain select men (as Magistrates, and Freemen) have power to make Lawes, and the Magistrates to execute Justice, and Judgement amongst the People, according to such Lawes.
>
> By the Patent we have Power to erect such a Government of the Church, as is most agreeable to the word, to the estate of the People, and to the gaining of Natives (in Gods time) first to Civility, and then to Christianity.
>
> To this Authority established by this Patent, *English-men* doe readily submit themselves; and foraine Plantations (the *French,* the *Dutch,* and

[35] Roger Williams*, Mr. Cotton's Letter Examined and Answered* (London, 1644), 4.

[36] John Cotton, "Reply to Mr. VVilliams," 27.

> *Swedish*) doe willingly transact their Negotiations with us, as with a Colony established by the Royall Authorities of the State of England.[37]

How dare Williams challenge the charter, Cotton suggested, when the entire colonial project depended upon it?

Williams, however, would have known all these things already. A protégé of Sir Edward Coke, and acquainted with such men as Oliver Cromwell, Williams knew the "languages" of legitimation as well as anyone. Cotton's response about the patent's practical effects did not address his key legal question: by what right did the King grant the patent in the first place? We do not have a record of what Williams argued in his own words, but according to Cotton, he had pointed out to the magistrates a fundamental inconsistency in the argument by *vacuum domicilium*. Englishmen themselves, he noted, sometimes left large tracts of land in England un-"planted," and unless they were prepared to forfeit their own lands to those who would "improve" it, they ought not apply that argument to others. He pursued this argument by way of comparison:

> the Natives, though they did not, nor could subdue the Countrey, (but left it *vacuum Domicilium*) yet they hunted all the Countrey over, and for the expedition of their hunting voyages, they burnt up all the underwoods in the Countrey, once or twice a yeare, and therefore as Noble men in *England* possessed great Parkes, and the King, great Forrests in *England*

[37] Cotton, "Reply to Mr. VVilliams," 27.

> onely for their game . . . So might the Natives challenge the like Propriety of the Countrey here.[38]

In other words, unless the King was prepared to give up as *vacuum domicilium* his royal forests to those who wished to "plant" it, the English could not claim that New England was a *res nullius* or a *vacuum domicilium*. The natives were using it in an organized and purposeful way—a way equivalent to how Europeans sometimes used vast tracts of territory—and thus had rights to the land.

Cotton's subsequent reply included a full repertoire of legitimation claims, complete with all of their contradictions, demonstrating his ready familiarity with the languages of law and empire. He first attempted to create a loophole in the *res nullius* argument by suggesting that, if a landowner was a dedicated public servant in other ways, he did not have to fully utilize his land: "The King, and Noble men in *England*, as they possessed greater Territories then other men, so they did greater service to Church, and Common-wealth." As this tactic alone would hardly have satisfied Williams, he drew up a second. In it he attempted to establish that something more than mere hunting was required to qualify as "land improvement," but not so much that his own king should have to "plant" his forests: "[the King and noblemen] employed," he argues, "their Parkes, and Forrests, not for hunting onely, but for Timber, and for the nourishment of tame beasts, as well as wild, and also for habitation to sundry Tenants." Williams, we can imagine, could easily have argued that the Indians did the same.

[38] Cotton, "Reply to Mr. VVilliams," 28.

No matter, Cotton was prepared to throw still another argument his way. This one sounded more like Richard Gray—suggesting that the colonists had not really taken anything from the Indians, and had indeed, helped them: "our Townes here did not disturb the huntings of the Natives, but did rather keepe their Game fitter for their taking; for they take their Deere by Traps, and not by Hounds." Certainly, he implied, the natives must be grateful for the English settlers' benevolent presence. His fourth argument reversed the whole terms of the debate by suggesting that anyway, when required, the colonists had purchased lands from the Indians, even though his first three arguments would have suggested that the Indians had no rights to the land at all, and thus no rights to sell any. "If they complained of any straites wee put upon them, wee gave satisfaction in some payments, or other, to their content."

But in the end, Cotton ultimately resorted to the basic argument of *vacuum domicilium*—"We did not conceive that it is a just Title to so vast a Continent, to make no other improvement of millions of Acres in it, but onely to burne it up for pastime." Not surprisingly, Williams did not see why this argument should not also apply to the King's forests, which were actually used for pastime, unlike the natives' territories, used for subsistence hunting and farming. Thus, "this was still pressed by him as a Nationall sinne, to hold to the Patent, yea, and a Nationall duty to renounce the Patent." "Which to have done," Cotton declares frankly, "had subverted the fundamentall State, and Government of the Countrey." On this last point, at least, Williams would almost

certainly have agreed. To give up the patent was to give up the government of the country.[39]

Cotton's response to Williams highlights two key issues. The first demonstrates the practical effects of these fairly abstract legal debates when applied in the colonial context. Certainly, jurists in England, as Pagden, Pocock, Armitage, and others have shown, had reasons to take these arguments seriously. They affected England's reputation and its ability to negotiate with other European nations in the Atlantic political arena. Yet these broad matters were not nearly so immediate to English writers as those outlined by Cotton were for colonial writers. The charter, he had reminded Williams, was responsible for enabling migrants to leave the country and carry out their goods, to make laws and execute justice, to erect their own churches according to their reformed ideals, and to negotiate and trade with other nations.

Cotton's response makes clear the very concrete and devastating consequences that would follow for the colonists if the patent were abandoned. Although he is unable to persuasively or coherently defend its legal *validity*, he is very clear about its *use.* To deny it would "subvert the fundamentall state, and Government of the Countrey." That is to say, for once in his career, Cotton was less concerned with whether this charter, as a text, was true and philosophically consistent, and more concerned with whether it was widely *persuasive* and thus pragmatically *effective* in enabling the colonists to pursue their religious and social goals. And as he made clear, it *was* pragmatically effective, to the extent that the colonists had been able to set up their government and secure the

[39] Cotton, "Reply to Mr. VVilliams," 28.

acknowledged legitimacy from other countries working in the region. If Cotton's view of the patent's importance was shared by other colonial leaders—and we can assume that it was, since the court used it as the primary reason to banish Williams—then the colonists were clearly attuned to the "language of empire" in general and, in particular, to the importance of maintaining key representations of legitimacy for their community and larger project.

Cotton's response also suggests how Williams' first offense connected to his second—his refusal to swear the oath of fidelity (or the oath of a freeman) and his urging others to reject it. The "Oath"—the first document published in the colonies (1634)—was itself a legal instrument which built on the rights outlined in the patent in order to secure for the colonial government the sworn fidelity and participation of its freemen, in the same way that the "oath of fidelity" to the crown secured submission to the King. To be made a freeman in Massachusetts required meeting four main requirements, each potentially difficult to attain: ownership of substantial property, official membership in (not just attendance at) a colonial congregational church, swearing the oath of fidelity to the crown, and swearing the Massachusetts Bay "Oath of a Freeman." While the oath of fidelity to the crown acknowledged the settlers' fundamental identities as English subjects under the authority of the king, the "Oath of a Freeman," much more than Cotton suggested, secured their subjection to the immediate rule of the colonial court. As such, it was an instrument of local power which in turn, as we discussed earlier, served as an tool of legitimation in international arguments about the nature of British empire.

The colony's "Oath of a Freeman" as worded by the Massachusetts General Court in 1634 reveals the mechanism by which the charter's liberties were translated into a coherent and orderly colonial church-state. The first step is to ensure the freeman's subjection to the colonial government:

> I, A. B., being, by Gods providence, an inhabitant & ffreeman within the jurisdiction of this commonweale, doe freely acknowledge my selfe to be subiect to the government thereof, & therefore doe here sweare, by the greate & dreadfull name of the euerlyveing God, that I wilbe true & faithfull to the same, & will accordingly yeilde assistance & support thereunto, with my person & estate, as in equity I am bound, & will also truly indeavor to mainetaine & preserue all the libertyes & previlidges thereof, submitting my selfe to the wholesome lawes & orders made & established by the same.

Although the oath concludes with the freeman's solemn promise to exercise his suffrage according to the dictates of his own conscience, the records quickly circumscribe this freedom with the Court's power.

> Further it is agreed, that none but the Generall Court hath power to chuse and admit ffreemen.
>
> That none but the Generall Court hath power to make and establishe lawes, nor to elect and appoynct officers, as Governor, Deputy Governor, Assistants, Treasurer, Secretary, Captain, Leiuetenents, Ensignes, or any

> of like moment, or to remove such upon misdemeanor, as also to sett out the dutyes and powers of the said officers.
>
> That none but the Generall Court hath power to rayse moneyes & taxes, & to dispose of lands, videlicet, to giue & confirme proprietyes.[40]

That the status of "freeman" entailed a significant subjection to the colonial government grows clear from a telling entry in the Court's 1648 *Book of the General Lawes and Libertyes Concerning the Inhabitants of the Massachusets*. By the time of the publication of this document, the status of "freeman" had come to be seen as a set of obligations to the colonial governments, rather than as a set of "libertyes & previlidges":

> Whereas there are within this Jurisdiction many members of Churches who to exempt themselves from all publick service in the Common-wealth will not come in, to be made Freemen, it is therefore ordered by this Court and the Authoritie thereof, That all such members of Churches in the severall towns within this Jurisdicton shall not be exempted from such publick service as they are from time to time chosen to by the Freemen of the severall towns; as Constables, Jurors, Select-men and Surveyors of high-wayes. And if any such person shall refuse to serve in, or take upon him any such Office being legally chosen thereunto, he shall pay for every such refusal such Fine as the town shall impose, not exceeding twenty shillings as Freemen are liable to in such cases. [1647][41]

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[40] *Records of Massachusetts Bay*, vol. 1, 117.

[41] *The Book of the General Lawes and Libertyes Concerning the Inhabitants of the Massachusets Collected Out of the Records of the General Court for the Several Years Wherin They Were Made and Established,*

Moreover, a freeman could not buy land from the Indians or sell to them, nor did he have any "right" to inhabit the colony's chartered territory.

As the discussion between Cotton and Williams makes clear, the Oath functioned as a means for translating the patent's legal privileges into mechanisms assuring that the colony would indeed take the tightly communitarian and theocratic form its leaders wished to create. By refusing the oath and the patent, Williams was not merely defending the rights of the Indians or insisting upon religious separatism; indeed, he was refusing to participate in the rhetorical means by which the colony would legitimate its identity and enact its vision.

As Pocock has argued, "professional" discourses often got appropriated by various "laities." Although the highly educated clergy and magistrates of the Massachusetts Bay Colony can hardly be called "laities," they also were not primarily trained in law or political philosophy. Yet questions of colonial legitimacy affected them directly; on these arguments rode not merely their reputations and public identity, but the whole structure of their community. Colonial leaders had managed to protect their charter and privileges throughout the first part of the seventeenth century, partly by banishing men such as Williams who attempted to challenge their rhetoric of legitimacy, and partly by arguing with such naysayers in print. Yet by the 1670s the colony and its charter were in trouble as Charles II began to take the colonies under more direct royal control. While intellectual historians have tracked colonists' attempts in explicit legal and philosophical

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(Cambridge, 1648; reprint, San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 1975), 23. See also *The Colonial Laws of Massachusetts. Reprinted from the Edition of 1672, with the Supplements to 1686*, ed. William H. Whitmore (Boston: Rockwell and Churchill, 1890).

arguments to manage these challenges, it is my contention that we can see these matters being tackled more subtly, and yet powerfully, in narrative and reporting genres. Conversely, without this larger political context, the full import of these writings does not emerge.

Chapter 3: "Wonders in the Deep": Atlantic Sea-Providence Narratives and New England Identity

"They who go down to the Sea in Ships, that do business in great waters,
These see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep."

—Psalm 107: 23-24

"The ground of all those miseries, was the permissive Providence of God, who, in the fore-mentioned violent storme, separated the head from the bodie, all the vitall powers of Regiment being exiled with Sir Thomas Gates in those infortunate (yet fortunate) Ilands. The broken remainder of [the fleet] made a greater shipwracke in the Continent of Virginia, by the tempest of Dissention: every man over-valuing his own worth, would be a Commander: every man underprizing anothers value, denied to be commanded."

—William Strachey, in Samuel Purchas's *Hakluytus Posthumus, or Purchas His Pilgrimes*

"I and my Wife were almost naked both of us, and wet and cold even unto death,. [sic] I found a Snapsack cast on the shoar, in which I had a Steel and Flint and Powder-horn. Going further I found a drowned Goat, then I found a Hat, and my Son *William's* Coat, both which I put on. My Wife found one of her Petticoats which she put on. I found also two Cheeses and some Butter driven ashoar. Thus the Lord sent us some clothes to put on, and food to sustain our new lives which we had lately given unto us; and means also to make fire."

—Anthony Thacher, in Increase Mather's *Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences*

"Business in Great Waters"

Eleventh-century England's *Wonders of the East*,[1] Marco Polo's 1298/99 *Description of the World*,[2] and *Mandeville's Travels* (1480, comp. c. 1357)[3]—in these influential medieval and early renaissance texts, one can readily see the intertwining development of travel writings and wonder writings. Later, with Columbus' first letter to Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain (1493), Europe's fascination with the exotic East shifted westward to the wonders of its newfound "marvelous possessions"[4] in the Atlantic: the Americas, and their peoples. The genre then picked up new content, new narrative forms, and also new and often reprehensible uses. Yet the connection between voyage writings and wonder rhetoric remained fundamental. Wonders could emerge anywhere (and for the entirely fictitious explorations of a Mandeville, especially on one's writing desk), but they seemed to proliferate in the unfamiliar regions just beyond the borders of home. The topos of travel provided the occasion for wonder writings well beyond 1600, the date at

[1] It is hard to assign a specific date for the finalization of this text into the forms it takes in the three extant British manuscripts that contain it (Cotton Tiberius Bv, pt. I, Bodley 614, and Cotton Vitellius Axv). Mary B. Campbell notes that "the text of *Wonders* underwent such a long and complex process of translation, redaction, and dissemination throughout Europe that its literary form as stabilized in the extant British manuscripts is hard to pin down" (63). See also its only modern editor, Paul Allen Gibb, ed. and trans., "*Wonders of the East:* A Critical Edition and Commentary" (Ph.D. diss, Duke University, 1977).

[2] Marco Polo, *The Travels of Marco Polo* (1298/99), trans. Ronald Latham (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1958).

[3] *Mandeville's Travels* (1480, comp. c. 1357), ed. M. C. Seymour (London: Oxford University Press, 1968).

[4] Stephen Greenblatt has homed in on two key terms appearing in Columbus's first letter home to Luis de Santangel (also known as the letter to Sanchez): his characterization of the newfound western islands and peoples as so many "possession[s] for their highnesses," and his representation of this discovery as having been "marvelously" bestowed by God. His chapter on Columbus appears in *Marvelous Possessions.*

which Mary B. Campbell concludes her definitive study on exotic European travel writing, and it must open our foray into wonders in colonial New England writings.[5]

To understand wonders in New England texts we will first consider sea-voyage narratives from the first several generations of colonization in America—a subject that has fallen between the gaps of most existing scholarship. Examining these narratives over the course of the seventeenth century submerses us in one of the early modern period's most established narrative forms for recounting commoners' experiences of religious wonders, a form which also, not incidentally, held a significant track record of serving nations' or groups' self-promotional agenda. By viewing sea-providence narratives from the particular vantage point of struggling American colonists but within the context of prior English uses of the genre, we can discern how individuals' "wondrous" experiences at sea were made politically and socially to validate the English colonies in New England. The patterns developed by these narratives, as later chapters will show, reappear in and give shape to several other major genres of wonder narratives.

In the introductory chapters, I have proposed a critical historical framework for this and subsequent chapters' analyses. There I outlined several pressing reasons why New England colonists needed to project new representations of themselves to audiences abroad. In particular, damaging reports had leaked across the Atlantic about colonists' increasing clashes with native groups, which culminated in the immensely bloody conflict known as "King Philip's War" (1675-76). In addition, some of the colonial government's official activities, such as hanging Quakers, banishing dissenters, dealing

[5] See Campbell's rich study of travel writing from medieval pilgrimages through Sir Walter Ralegh's *Discoverie of . . . Guiana*: Mary B. Campbell, *The Witness and the Other World.*

aggressively with nearby Indians, as well as forming an illegal pan-colony confederation, showed how the colonies had overstepped their chartered privileges and promoted their own agenda at the crown's expense. By the charter struggles in the 1660s and 1680s-90s, these negative representations had played into the machinations of Charles II's Lords of Trade, who revoked the Massachusetts Bay Colony's charter in 1684. More generally, Bay colonists found themselves in a struggle with the broader court of international public opinion, on a lesser scale but in a similar way as had the Spanish and Virginians before them. It is in this context that we must read narratives published as colonial self-representations, I argue, if we are to understand the transatlantic political situation in which they attempted to intervene.

As leading Massachusetts Bay colonists sought to protect their colony's political autonomy and promote its public reputation, some New England editors of sea providences also pursued a more far-reaching religious goal: their texts advanced a subtle argument for American exceptionalism within the ongoing transnational Protestant reformation. While circumstances in America deeply marked New Englanders, it is this larger, transnational scene of Protestants in England, France, Holland, Austria, Germany, and elsewhere by which New England leaders like John Winthrop, John Cotton, Increase Mather, or John Davenport ultimately measured their community's significance. As Pietists and Anabaptists struggled to pursue the Reformation in Saxony or Holland, New England's most public voices used natural wonders to argue for the specialness of their specific place in the emerging Atlantic world. They thus advanced a notion of sacred space that attempted to translate the perceived inferiority of their American colonial life

into spiritual authority. Taking up old narrative forms and recalculating their logic, they articulated what has by now become a core refrain of American literature and rhetoric: the exceptional quality of the American experience and its ability to cultivate an extraordinary people: "Americans." Contextualizing this rhetorical maneuver within its historical frame enables us to see the mechanics of its formation at work while simultaneously revealing the very unexceptional origins, motives, and methods of the claim.

Finally, this chapter also inserts itself into the related early modern histories of travel writing and natural philosophy—both of which concerned themselves with exploration and discovery, empire and empiricism. Colonists in New England generally lacked access to the inner circles of English power, especially after the Restoration, but they had overwhelming and intimate access to the matters of the "new" world increasingly valued by travel writing audiences and the emerging natural philosophy. They were eye-witness experts on America's Atlantic seaboard and islands; its native peoples; its strange fruits, wild animals, and violent weather; its vast lands seemingly available for the taking. Appearing at a defining point in the development of travel writing and at *the* turning point in the development of what would later be called the "new science," early colonial sea providence texts document the specific forms these new discourses would take as well as the *uses* to which they would be put by those at the margins of metropolitan society and politics.

With these foci in place, this chapter takes up the project first outlined by Pierre Bourdieau and Michel de Certeau: identifying how groups who stand outside positions of

cultural power modify influential discourses and use them as rhetorical tools for their own ends, even in ways that run counter to the original functions of the discourses. "The tactics of consumption," wrote de Certeau in *The Practice of Everyday Life,* "the ingenious ways in which the weak make use of the strong, thus lend a political dimension to everyday practices."[6] This interpretive angle fills a gap in the small but growing scholarship on post-sixteenth-century Atlantic sea voyage writings. Some scholars recently have recognized that shipwrecks often led to captivity and have used these texts to broaden the scope of captivity-narrative research on Anglo encounters with cultural others.[7] Others have found in the genre's often traumatic plots an ideal site for studying human interiority—emotions, desires, and affect—in the understudied periods of pre-twentieth century America.[8] Still others, adopting David S. Reynold's premise in *Beneath*

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[6] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Seven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984). See also Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power,* ed. John B. Thompson, trans. Gino Raymond and Matthew Adamson (Cambridge: Polity in association with Basil Blackwell, 1991); and Kenneth Burke, *The Philosophy of Literary Form: Studies in Symbolic Action* (Baton Rouge, 1941).

[7] See Hartman, *Providence Tales and the Birth of American Literature*; Kun Jong Lee, "Mapping Out the Terrain of Colonial American Literature: The Shipwreck Narrative and the Indian War Narrative," *The Journal of English Language & Literature*. 44 (1998):849-68; Margarette Lincoln, "Shipwreck Narratives of the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Century: Indicators of Culture and Identity," *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 20 (1997):155-72; Robin Miskolcze's work on representations of shipwrecked women, in "Transatlantic Touchstone: The Shipwrecked Woman in British and Early American Literature," *Prose Studies* 22 (1999), 41-56; and "Don't Rock the Boat: Women and Shipwreck Narratives in Early U. S. Culture" (Ph.D diss. University of Nebraska, Lincoln, 2000); Kay Schaffer's work on Eliza Fraser's shipwreck narratives in *In the Wake of First Contact: The Eliza Fraser Stories* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Ian J. McNiven, Lynette Russell and Kay Schaffer, eds., *Constructions of Colonialism: Perspectives on Eliza Fraser's Shipwreck* (London: Leicester University Press,1998); and Kay Schaffer and D'Arcy Randall, "Trans-Global Translations: The Eliza Fraser and Rachel Plummer Captivity Narratives," in *Captive and Free: Colonial and Post-Colonial Incarceration* (London: Cassell, 2001).

[8] For trauma studies of shipwreck narratives, see Julia Frances Burch, "Sink or Swim: Shipwreck Narratives, Survival Tales, and Postcultural Subjectivity," Diss. University of Michigan, 1994; Kathleen Donegan, "As Dying, Yet Behold We Live": Catastrophe and Interiority in Bradford's *Of Plymouth Plantation*," *Early American Literature* 37 (2002): 9-37; as well as Donegan's in-progress dissertation, which devotes a chapter to Anthony Thacher's shipwreck narrative.

the American Renaissance, have recognized that many literary "classics" of the sea that have long been considered the product of an individual genius—by men like Joseph Conrad, Herman Melville, James Fenimore Cooper, or Ernest Hemingway—actually drew heavily on existing popular genres, and so these scholars have set out to study the connections between low-brow and high-brow sea writing.[9]

Not surprisingly, however, the majority of this research focuses on the eighteenth and especially nineteenth centuries when sea-voyage narratives exploded in popularity and print availability. Work on the earlier period remains sparse. As a telling example, the chronology for Robert Foulke's genre study *The Sea Voyage Narrative* lists only one entry for the entire seventeenth century: William Dampier's 1698 *A New Voyage Round the World.* (In fact, his bias towards the modern period permits him to list a grand total of two sea-voyage narratives produced between the Greek *Periplus Maris Erythraei* in 60 A.D. and Daniel Defoe's 1719 *Robinson Crusoe).*[10] And yet, a significant number of narratives bridged the earlier years between European exploration and the eighteenth century's frenetic sea-narrative production.[11]

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[9] *Beneath the American Renaissance: The Subversive Imagination in the Age of Emerson and Melville* (New York: Knopf, 1988). See especially Hester Blum's work on nineteenth-century sailor-authored publications, "The View from the Mast-Head: Antebellum American Sea Narratives and the Maritime Imagination" (Ph.D. diss. University of Pennsylvania, 2002), in which she offers a corrective to the previously definitive study of Thomas Philbrick's *James Fenimore Cooper and the Development of American Sea Fiction* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1961). See also Donald P. Wharton, "Providence and the Colonial American Sea-Deliverance Tradition," *Essex Institute Historical Collections* 119 (1983): 42-48 and Haskell Springer, ed., *America and the Sea: A Literary History* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995).

[10] Robert Foulke, *The Sea Voyage Narrative* (New York: Twayne, 1997), xxi-xxii.

[11] See Rainer K. Baehre, ed., *Outrageous Seas: Shipwreck and Survival in the Waters off Newfoundland, 1583-1893* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999); Keith Huntress, ed., *Narratives of Shipwrecks and Disasters, 1586-1860* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1974) as well as his *Checklist of Narratives of Shipwrecks and Disasters at Sea to 1860, with Summaries, Notes, and Comments* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1979); and Donald P. Wharton, ed., *In the Trough of the Sea: Selected*

A few scholars do study this earlier period, but for the most part they have not come out of the ranks of U.S. Americanists. The Canadian Rainer K. Baehre, for example, has studied and anthologized early sea narratives pertaining to Newfoundland, while other scholars have investigated Spanish-American, Indo-Caribbean, or South African writings.[12] Most of the important work on sea-voyage narratives pertaining to colonization in Virginia or New England has been done by scholars of British literature and culture and has focused on a metropolitan, rather than colonial, point of view.[13] Collectively, these scholars remind us that sea voyages may have been defining experiences for those who eventually founded the United States, but the pre-U.S. colonies did not define the sea voyage narrative. Far from reducing these texts' value for early Americanists, however, the narratives' transnational features open the door for a less exceptionalist, more comparatist approach to colonial history and literature as urged by recent leading scholars—an approach that traces the connections between New

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American Sea-Deliverance Narratives, 1610-1766 (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1979). Most recently, the Library of America has issued a new anthology including narratives from the early seventeenth century (William Strachey's) through the late twentieth: *American Sea Writing: A Literary Anthology,* ed. Peter Neill (New York: Library of America, 2000).

[12] See Baehre's introduction to *Outrageous Seas*. See also Hortensia Calvo-Stevenson, "Sinking Being: Shipwrecks and Colonial Spanish-American Writing," (Ph.D. diss. Yale University, 1991); Carmen Moreno-Nuno, "Cabeza de Vaca's Naufragios in Light of Deleuze and Guattari's Semiotics and Theory of Language," *RLA: Romance Languages Annual* 8 (1996): 589-95; Jeremy Poynting, "From Shipwreck to Odyssey: One Hundred Years of Indo-Caribbean Writing," *Wasafiri* 21 (1995): 56-57; Ian E. Glenn, "The Wreck of the Grosvenor and the Making of South African Literature," *English in Africa* 22 (1995): 1-18; and Todd Oakley Lutes, "Shipwreck and Deliverance: Modernity and Political Culture in Latin American Literature," (Ph.D. diss., University of Arizona, 1995).

[13] Most notably for sea providence literature, see James Peter Conlan, "Marvelous Passages: English Nautical Piety in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance" (Ph.D. diss. University of California, Riverside, 1999).

Englanders' experiences and those of colonists in other areas of the globe and that recognizes the scope of the early modern Atlantic's religious and political scene.[14]

Seventeenth-century Atlantic sea-voyage narratives deserve some attention by U.S. Americanists. Yet to remedy the problem, I suspect, requires an interest in the sorts of theoretical-historical questions posed by de Certeau and Bourdieau—questions that inquire into the various kinds of authorship and appropriation available to historical groups—and not just a willingness to read the stories. Scholars' prior inattention to these texts may have resulted from their inability to recognize the kinds of authorship that shaped the narratives. One of the most significant features of the genre is that most of its tales were originally told by individuals not usually recognized as authors—ordinary people speaking from personal experience, not from class or educational privilege, and often relying on another to record and publish their narratives. These individuals' accounts often appeared embedded within other writers' texts. Although experiences considered wondrous could authorize an unusually broad range of individuals—many of them unlettered, working-class, or female—to tell their stories, this authority did not necessarily lend them control over the form or even words their narratives would eventually take as recorded texts, a power present-day readers generally associate with authorship. As a result, even those narratives recounted by writers such as John Winthrop and Increase Mather have often been overlooked. Certainly the fact of the texts' hybrid authorship—that Winthrop or Mather obtained their stories second-hand, already articulated by another—has generally been elided. Yet several of these high-profile

[14] See especially the recent declarations about "Atlantic" studies in David Armitage, "Three Concepts of Atlantic History;" and Joyce E. Chaplin, "Expansion and Exceptionalism in Early American History."

writers themselves tried to return attention to the voices of the commoners whose experiences they recorded—when it suited their purposes, at least. Present-day scholars interested in early modern writers and discourse often gloss too quickly over the material practices of literary mediation—the appropriating, editing, publishing, and reproduction of the texts within their own time—that played a significant role in how the texts were *used* and by whom. It is the question of usage that I pursue in the following pages.

Interpretive Logic and Narrative Evidence: The Uses of Sea-Providence Narratives

> June 15, 1637
>
> About this time came home a small pinnace of thirty tons, which had been forth eight months, and was given for lost. She went to the Bermuda, but by continual tempests was kept from thence, and forced to bear up for the West Indies, and, being in great distress, arrived at Hispaniola, and not daring to go into any inhabited place there, but to go ashore in obscure places, and lived of turtles and hogs, etc. At last they were forced into a harbor, where lay a French man-of-war with his prize, and had surely made prize of them also, but that the providence of God so disposed, as the captain, one Petfree, had lived at Pascataquack, and knew the merchant of our bark, one Mr. Gibbons. Whereupon he used them courteously, and, for such commodities as she carried, freighted her with tallow, hides, etc., and sent home with her his prize, which he sold for a small price to be paid in New England. He brought home an aligarto, which he gave the governour.
>
> —John Winthrop, *The Journal of John Winthrop*[15]

If we know how to read it, the short story of Edward Gibbons tells us plenty about how the wonders in sea-providence narratives were used in the early years of colonization. It first appeared in John Winthrop's *Journal*—or what Winthrop himself

[15] John Winthrop, *The Journal of John Winthrop, 1630-1648*, ed. Richard S. Dunn, James Savage, and Laetitia Yeandle (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996), 222.

called his *History of New England* (first complete printed edition in 1824)—which documented New England's "civil and ecclesiastical concerns, the geography, settlement, and institutions of the country, and the lives and manners of the principal planters" from the *Arbella's* arrival in 1630 to Winthrop's death in 1649.[16] For most of those years, Winthrop was the governor of the most powerful colony in New England, the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Winthrop's history was not published until much later, but it was known and regularly read in Winthrop's own day and after by major figures who accessed his manuscripts and compiled their own histories from his information.

Perhaps for this reason, or perhaps because it retained life in the colony's oral traditions, the tale of Gibbons was repeatedly republished over the course of the seventeenth century, and in the process it was changed to fit the interests of the re-tellers who made the story their own. By the end of the century, it was nearly unrecognizable to anyone familiar with the original story, having become a kind of text without an author—more akin to a rumor, popular legend, or chapbook narrative than a controlled authorial expression. Its ability to register and convey a more collective imagination, to be retold according to a modifiable formula over time, indicates the kind of value a popular narrative like this one held. But before we explore the cultural work it performed, we need to know why colonists would have found the narrative meaningful enough to bear re-telling in the first place. Why did it register so strongly?

[16] Because I refer to the Dunn, Savage, and Yeandle edition, I use their title for the work – the *Journal*. Winthrop, however, saw it as a public "history." Regarding the different titles, see Dunn, Savage, Yeandle, xi-xvi. Books one and two of Winthrop's *Journal* were first published in 1790, the third book was discovered in 1816. In 1824, James Savage re-edited the entire set and published it in two volumes.

The following section attempts to show that, beyond its sensational subject matter—a sensationalism replicated in thousands of voyage narratives that never acquired Gibbons' canonical status—the original Gibbons story efficiently deployed other well-known and richly significant narrative traditions, including the sixteenth-century English sea providence tale as well as much older sea-providence stories in the Bible, both of which had been used previously by English writers to validate imperial activities in America. To be sure, I am not suggesting that Winthrop manufactured this story or any of its details. Yet the very brevity of his account underscores that he chose to include certain factual details over others and to arrange them into a focused plot, one that, within the established interpretive frames of the day, would have appeared to provide evidence that the Bay colony's government was providentially sanctioned.

To a trained eye, it is not hard to see how the 1637 narrative evoked a nautical piety developed to justify England's exploration and colonization activities in America. Winthrop's reference to Bermudan tempests driving an English vessel off course would have sounded familiar to early modern audiences. They might have read one of the at least 6 publications referring to the 1610 Bermuda shipwreck of Sir Thomas Gates, governor of Virginia, and his company, or seen William Shakespeare's play based upon it, *The Tempest* (first performed at court in 1611, later printed in the First Folio of 1623). Or they might have read about the wreck as the first major story in the next-to-last book of Samuel Purchas' popular collection of English imperial travel voyages (1625) or scanned a broadside about it. If they had managed to miss all of these printed accounts,

they could have heard about it from an acquaintance or in a sermon.[17] In the wake of such widespread publicity, a Bermuda storm would have figured significantly in a sea narrative from an American colony, because in many of these accounts, the controversial 1610 shipwreck had been interpreted as indicating God's judgment of the Jamestown colony and, more generally, English colonial designs.

We can anticipate the major strains of this larger public debate by taking a closer look at the most influential account of the affair: the narrative of William Strachey, Esquire, who was aboard the ship that foundered.[18] Details from his famous text will help

[17] For contemporary published accounts of the wreck and its impact, see the Virginia Company, *A True and Sincere declaration of the purpose and ends of the Plantation begun in Virginia, of the degrees which it hath received; and meanes by which it hath beene advanced : and the resolution and conclusion of his Majesties Councel of that Colony, for the constant and patient prosecution thereof, until by the mercies of GOD it shall retribute a fruitful harvest to the kingdome of heaven, and this Common-Wealth. Sett forth by the authority of the Governors and Councellors established for that Plantation* (London, 1610); Silvester Jourdain, *A Discovery of the Barmudas, otherwise called the Ile of Divels: By Sir Thomas Gates, Sir George Sommers, and Captayne Newport, with divers others. Set forth for the love of my Country, and also for the good of the Plantation of Virginia* (London, 1610), and also Jourdain, *A plaine description of the Barmudas, now called Sommer Ilands. With the manner of their discoverie anno 1609. by the shipwrack and admirable deliverance of Sir Thomas Gates, and Sir George Sommers, wherein are truly set forth the commodities and profits of that rich, pleasant, and healthfull countrie. With an addition, or more ample relation of diuers other remarkeable matters concerning those ilands since then experienced, lately sent from thence by one of the colonie now there resident* (London, 1613); Richard Rich, *Newes from Virginia. The lost flocke triumphant. With the happy arrivall of that famous and worthy knight Sr. Thomas Gates: and the well reputed & valiant captaine Mr. Christopher Newporte, and others, into England. With the maner of their distresse in the Iland of Devils (otherwise called Bermoothawes) where they remayned 42. weekes, & builded two pynaces, in which they returned into Virginia. By R. Rich, Gent. one of the voyage* (London 1610); William Crashawe's "Epistle Dedicatorie" in Alexander Whitaker, *Good newes from Virginia Sent to the Counsell and Company of Virginia, resident in England. From Alexander Whitaker, the minister of Henrico in Virginia. Wherein also is a narration of the present state of that countrey, and our colonies there. Perused and published by direction from that Counsell. And a preface prefixed of some matters touching that plantation, very requisite to be made knowne* (London, 1613). Fifteen years later, William Strachey's authoritative manuscript was finally imprinted as "A true reportory of the wracke, and redemption of Sir Thomas Gates Knight; upon, and from the Ilands of the Bermudas: his coming to Virginia, and the estate of that Colonie then, and after, under the government of the Lord La Warre, July 15, 1610. written by William Strachy, Esquire," *Hakluytus Posthumus, or Purchas His Pilgrimes, Contayning a History of the World in Sea Voyages and Lande Travells by Englishmen and others*, 1625, Samuel Purchas (Glasgow: James MacLehose and Sons, 1906).

[18] Strachey's version of events, written in 1610, did not see print right away. He wrote it, first and foremost, for a private audience: the Council of Virginia. In 1610, his narrative was carried to England by Gates, who traveled back after the new governor, De La Warre, arrived. Gates delivered it to the Council, and from

establish the horizon of expectations in which Gibbons was received by reading publics, as well as attune us to the aspects of the shipwreck that would have most concerned colonial leaders.

Writing from Jamestown in 1610 to the venture's financiers back in England, Strachey relates how he set sail on June 2, 1609, in the *Sea Venture*—the lead ship in a fleet consisting of "seven good Ships, and two Pinnaces, all which from the said second of June, unto the twenty three of July, kept in friendly consort together." With him sailed the new governor of Virginia, Sir Thomas Gates, Knight, as well as the fleet's admiral, Sir George Somers. The fleet stayed together until Monday, July 24, when, "the cloudes gathering thicke upon us, and the windes singing, and whistling most unusually, . . . a dreadfulle storme and hideous began to blow from out the North-east, which swelling, and roaring as it were by fits, some houres with more violence then others, at length did beate all light from heaven." The fleet scattered in the storm, and on July 28 the *Sea Venture* washed up on the Bermuda archipelago.[19] Gates and Somers sent a long boat for Virginia and scanned the horizon daily, but no one came. They remained on the island for nearly a year.

With the travelers safe on shore but facing a protracted stay in Bermuda, the narrative turns from the melodrama of a violent Atlantic sea to the high drama of a contentious English society on shore. Strachey shows how the challenges of governing a

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thence the manuscript was passed around in prominent circles. At some point during that time, Shakespeare is supposed to have seen it. Eventually it found its way to Samuel Purchas, who printed it as the lead story in his 1625 first edition of *Purchas His Pilgrimes,* which focuses upon the colonization of Virginia through 1624, the plantation of New England, New Scotland, and Newfoundland.

[19] Strachey, "True repertory," 5, 30.

shipwrecked group almost proved the mission's undoing. While Admiral Somers built two pinnaces with which to ship the group off the island, a series of mutinous conspiracies arose. Some laborers had discovered that in Bermuda one could live well without much effort—an appealing prospect given the hard work and starvation rumored to await them in Virginia. From this realization issued a series of attempts by small groups to defy the governor's authority and set up independent settlements. Perhaps more dangerously, a broader sense apparently took hold among some of the colonists that, in this new land, traditional leaders had lost their legal status as authorities as well as the power to enforce their rule. Although the governor was able to squelch the first two mutinies without hanging anyone, Strachey relates that Gates eventually executed a man, not even a common laborer but a "Gentleman . . . , one *Henry Paine,*" who spoke seditiously against the governor by stating "with a setled and bitter violence, and in such unreverent tearmes, . . . how *that the Governour had no authoritie of that qualitie, to justifie upon any one (how meane soever in the Colonie) an action of that nature, and therefore let the Governour* (said hee) *kisse, &c.*"[20] Strachey's portrayal of Englishmen running away from their own settlement (an image repeated with frequency in later accounts from Jamestown) and lewdly challenging their leaders reveals a social group flying apart—or in Strachey's nautical metaphor, drowning in the "tempest of Dissention."

Like the Gibbons tale, Strachey's text ultimately returns its interest from the shipwreck to the economic fate of the main colony and the success of the government

[20] Strachey, "True repertory," 43.

there. Yet the Bermuda shipwreck is not forgotten. The second half of his narrative uses it as a rhetorical figure by which to understand events in Virginia, where community coherence and allegiance to authority had almost wholly dissolved, leading to an even "greater shipwracke in the Continent of Virginia" than in Bermuda. There he describes what he saw when Gates' company finally arrived in Jamestown: the town in shambles, the inhabitants dead or dying, no stores of food with winter coming on, and relationships with the Indians irreparably antagonistic. The cause of these misfortunes, Strachey stressed, was not to be blamed on America itself or even on the Indians. Instead, the sorry state of affairs resulted from a lack of good government and from the colonists' inherent social defects—their "sloath, riot, and vanity"—rather than any natural faults of the country. It is in these post-wreck portions of the narrative that Strachey begins to articulate a broader legal and social definition of shipwreck, one that accounts for the full implications of setting up a society on a foreign shore, far from traditional legal authorities, social structures, or material resources. The circumstance of a shipwrecked people, in his account, spells out the general situation of a new colony. In particular, both circumstances seemed to allow a group to show its true colors, to reveal its real nature and fundamental identity. Both could bring out and thus reveal the unruly, self-interested, and ungodly—or, conversely, well-ordered, communitarian, and god-directed—characteristics of a social group set loose from the homeland's constraining social structure; and in turn, both could demonstrate a group's ability (or failure) to govern itself according to England's and God's codes. Should a colony fail to govern itself aright, it would ultimately prove itself to be nothing more than a shipwreck. While Strachey's final

paragraphs argue for the good government of Gates and Lord La Warre over Jamestown, overall his text served to highlight major perceived threats to English colonization: the credibility and efficacy of colonial governments, and the ability of the colony to function as a coherent English society far from the metropolis.[21]

Not all of the reports on the Bermuda shipwreck would outline so clearly the social dimension of a shipwreck or its parallels to the general situation of a new colony. They did not necessarily have to be explicit, however. Prior English and European writers had established broadly accepted interpretations for shipwreck narratives that themselves connected physical events at sea to more fundamental questions about a colony's social and legal credibility. In many cases, these writers had suggested that a shipwreck, more clearly than a written proclamation, spelled out God's indictment of the voyagers and their mission.

To understand this interpretive logic, we need to consider more closely the historical circumstances surrounding the wreck, its meaning for advocates of colonization, and their active attempts to construct public opinion in a way that would protect their interests. Gates' vessel was the flagship of a seven-vessel fleet intended to bring new life to England's first struggling colony in America, and its loss would have signaled a severe blow to the Council for Virginia. Over the previous three years, Jamestown had become something of an expensive and embarrassing disaster. Between 1607 and 1609, most of the three hundred men sent to Jamestown had died.[22] Of those

[21] Strachey, "True repertory," 66, 46.

[22] Within the first few months of arrival, then-president of the colony Edward Maria Wingfield wrote that of the 105 men and boys arrived in the spring, forty had died from sickness. By August, "sickness had not

who remained, some who were sick from Jamestown's brackish water, swampy air, or lack of food had attempted to run away to the Indians, while others, including leading gentlemen, were imprisoned for "sow[ing] discord."[23] Something close to anarchy ensued. Affairs continued in disarray until the Council of Virginia decided that the colony's problems issued from its weak structure of government. They secured new patents for the colony, enabling them to appoint an absolute governor, and on these new powers and this new governor—all sailing in the *Sea Venture*—rode their hopes for future success. The *Sea Venture*'s loss was thus seen by some as signaling the doom of the colony. In particular, it seemed to suggest that God did not support colonization of America; Gates' experience in Bermuda and at Jamestown, as conveyed by Strachey, would not have countered this conclusion.[24]

Such events were easily taken as portents. Over the twenty years prior to the Bermuda wreck, English writers had had much to say about the meaning of sea providences as signs of God's will. After the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588, achieved largely by a great storm off the northern coast of England that reduced Spain's 100-ship fleet to a mere 11, those promoting English imperial expansion (such as Richard Eden, Richard Hakluyt, and Sir George Peckham) as well as major English theologians (including William Crashawe, Theodore Beza, and even George Abbott, Archbishop of Canterbury) had argued that the Armada's wreck signaled God's judgment against the

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now left us six able men in our town." See Edward Maria Wingfield, "A Discourse of Virginia," 1608, in *Transactions and Collections of the American Antiquarian Society* IV (Boston, 1860), 77-98.

[23] Wingfield, "Discourse," 59.

[24] See in particular the Council for Virginia's response to news of the *Sea Venture's* loss, *A True and Sincere declaration.*

Spanish and his support of the English and their Protestant church. Providential interpretations of the Armada defeat continued to proliferate into the seventeenth century. Only a few years before the Bermuda shipwreck in 1606, Sir Edward Coke, the King's Chief Justice, had argued that the Spanish Armada's wreck was an act of God's providence, one that proved Spain's cause unjust.[25] Such interpretive logic would remain viable through 1609 and well beyond. Adhering rigorously to Armada logic in the case of Gates and the *Sea Venture* would necessarily have implied a grave conclusion: God did not support the Virginia Colony or England's expansion into the Americas, either.

Events, however, could be made to signify differently if one could construct an alternative interpretive logic. We can watch the emergence of a new way of "reading" shipwreck events in the responses published in 1610 by the Council of Virginia. Early that year, still not knowing whether Gates and his company were dead or alive, the Council issued the first in what was to become a flood of publications about the Bermuda storm, a kind of early spin-doctoring of the event's political implications. In their *True and Sincere declaration of the purpose and ends of the Plantation begun in Virginia,* they acknowledged that many viewed the event as an omen and negative judgment, and they attempted to directly address "the imputations and aspertions, with which ignorant rumor,

[25] Sir Edward Coke, *A True and Perfect Relation of the Proceedings at the Several Arraignments of the Late Most Barbarous Traitors* (London, 1607), 58. My discussion of nautical piety as component of England's imperialist promotional rhetoric draws significantly from the dissertation and published articles of J. P. Conlan. See Conlan, "Marvelous Passages," esp. 341-81. See also Conlan's published articles on nautical piety and empire: "Shakespeare's Edward III: A Consolation for English Recusants," *Comparative Drama* 35(2001): 177-207; "A Witness Much Abused: BL MS Harley 7334 and the Stemma of the Canterbury Tales," *Analytical & Enumerative Bibliography* 10(1999): 120-47; "Paradise Lost: Milton's Anti-Imperial Epic," *Pacific Coast Philology* 33(1998): 31-43; and "The Tempest and the King's Better Knowledge," *The Ben Jonson Journal: Literary Contexts in the Age of Elizabeth, James & Charles* 6(1999): 161-88.

virulent envy, or impious subtilty, daily callumniateth our industries, and the successe of it." To do so, they refigured the event not as a judgment but as a *trial*, a test of both their resolve and their motives. They agreed that the storm was the work of God; "Who can avoid the hand of God, or dispute with him?" But the purpose of God's hand, they suggested, was to prepare the colonists for their future work by trying them.[26]

"Is hee fitt to under take any great action, whose courage is shaken and dissolved with one storme?" they inquired. "Who knows, whither he that disposed of our hearts to so good beginnings, bee now pleased to trye our constancie and perseverance, and to discerne between the ends of our desires, whiether *Pyety* or *Covetousnesse* carried us swifter?" The tempest, they pointed out, provided a good test. If the Council's desired ends were pious, no mere storm would deter them, they argued. In fact, setbacks would only help them to demonstrate that they were not "cowardly and faintly." If the "ends of [their] desires" lay with money, on the other hand, then the investors would surely back out as their losses racked up. They, the stalwart members of the Council for Virginia, they insisted, were of the pious sort. "The *Principall* and *Maine Ends* [of the Virginia Colony]," they declared, " . . . were *first* to preach, baptize into *Christian Religion*, and by propagation of that *Gospell*, to recover out of the armes of the Divell, a number of poore and miserable soules, wrapt upp unto death, in almost *invincible ignorance*." Saving the indigenous people from ignorance and the devil would serve an even higher purpose ennobling their sacrifice: "to endeavour the fulfilling, and accomplishment of the number of the elect, which shall be gathered from out all corners of the earth; and to add

[26] Council for Virginia, *True and Sincere declaration*, 2.

our myte to the treasury of Heaven, that as we pray for the coming of the kingdome of glory, so to expresse in our actions, the same desire, if God have pleased, to use so weak instruments, to the ripening & consummation thereof." The Virginia Colony's backers thus claimed that they sought nothing less than the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth. Virginia was for the Church, and in the light of this goal, a devastating Bermudan tempest could be no judgment—only a trial purifying these holy men and women for their godly work, work that the *True and Sincere declaration* strongly implied was ordained and predestined, advancing Virginia inevitably towards the "consummation" of the "coming of the kingdome of glory." What then could deter them from their manifest destiny?[27]

Imposing a new interpretive framework onto an event that might otherwise have been viewed negatively by a public familiar with such narratives, the Council made tempests and shipwrecks capable of signaling one of several *kinds* of attitudes God might express on the high seas. An additional, third kind of interpretation emerged once it became known that the *Sea Venture's* passengers and crew had (miraculously) survived. This third logic argued that the *Sea Venture's* story was one of divine deliverance and mercy—an expression of God's great care for the travelers and support of their cause—and not a disaster or even much of a trial. According to the logic of this interpretation, God sometimes allowed his people to fall into situations of extreme distress in order to demonstrate more vividly and irrefutably his desire to preserve them. In this way, a near-

[27] Council for Virginia, *True and Sincere declaration*, 2.

disaster offered greater evidence of God's good favor than an uneventfully successful voyage.

In his opening epistle to Alexander Whitaker's *Good Newes from Virginia* (1613), for example, William Crashawe listed "the marvelous and indeed miraculous deliverance of our worthy Governours, Sir *Thomas* Gates" and his company as the first of four reasons why he had become convinced that "God himselfe is the founder, and favourer of this Plantation."[28] Taking a similar tack, Silvester Jourdain, who was apparently aboard the *Sea Venture* when it foundered, described first one providence (the colonists' survival of the wreck) and then another (their falling into the fruitful and temperate, not devil-ridden, Bermudas). He testifies that,

> Our delivery was not more strange in falling so opportunely, and happily upon the land, as our feeding and preservation, was beyond our hopes, and all mens' expectations most admirable. For the Ilands of the Barmudas, as every man knoweth that hath heard or read of them, were never inhabited by any Christian or heathen people, but ever esteemed, and reputed, a most prodigious and inchanted place.

The main thing to be concluded from these multiple providences, he suggests, is that "God in the supplying of all our wants, beyond all measure, shewed himselfe still mercifull unto us, that we might accomplish our intended voyage to Virginia, for which I confidently hope, hee doth yet reserve a blessing in store, and to the which I presume,

[28]William Crashawe, Preface, in Alexander Whitaker, *Good nevves from Virginia.*

every honest and religious heart will readily give their Amen."[29] Storms on the high seas were opportunities for God to rescue a group against all the odds—to deliver them from the Armada's fate by directly intervening on their behalf—and thus to mark a group as his own, as people whose work he would support and enable.

This third interpretive logic had an old history. Literary historian J. P. Conlan has shown how English writers had long used dramatic near-catastrophes at sea to justify their violation of Spain's papally granted rights to the Americas. If God saved from certain death English vessels exploring or trading in direct defiance of the Papal Donation of 1493 and the 1494 Treaty of Tordesillas, which granted all of the Americas to Spain and Portugal, then God must approve of England's incursion on Spanish rights. According to Conlan, "the English travel narrative thus became more than a justification of English rights in the West Indies: the reports of English heroism became *de facto* evidence that the Pope had not the spiritual authority that he claimed to hold bound in heaven what he claimed to have bound in the world."[30]

Yet long before the Council for Virginia used a devastating shipwreck to promote colonization of America, Psalm 107 had established that the seas were a site for reading God's will: "They who go down to the Sea in Ships, that do business in great waters, see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep." The question of what a sea providence proved thus had much deeper theological roots. Jesus had calmed storms and seas to save his disciples. John the Baptist had taught that the kingdom of God must be entered by means of an initiation through water. God had raised a storm in order to chase

[29] Jourdain, *Discovery of the Barmudas*, 8-9, 20.

[30] Conlan, "Marvelous Passages," 23.

down Jonah and then prepare him for his future work as a prophet against Ninevah. Even more archetypally, the Red Sea had parted for God's chosen nation, Israel, and then washed back over their Egyptian enemies in a flood of destruction. The Red Sea's destroying flood was not unlike the most fundamental flood of all—the one that cleansed the earth from abominations in order to purify it, while bearing up God's chosen, Noah and his family, to generate the new world. If, in all of these instances, God used the violence of the sea to mark his people as chosen, to purify them for their greater task, and to destroy their enemies, then narratives of sea providence appeared to be a Biblically sanctioned way of establishing God's favor towards a group. For a Protestant country well versed in the Bible and crediting its most recent victory against Europe's superpower, Spain, to a divinely wrought ocean storm, sea-providence stories were a powerful way to argue for the godliness of a group and its activities. Early New England colonists had already specifically analogized their Atlantic crossing as a Red Sea experience.[31] The narratives provided, in essence, a kind of political and religious, and yet thoroughly empirical, *evidence.*

While sea-providence narratives could be used bluntly to support arguments for colonization, they also functioned in more subtle ways to construct representations of a group's or nation's identity. As Strachey demonstrates, a sea providence narrative did not merely evidence the probable *outcome* of attempted colonization: it could also provide a sharply drawn portrait of the *nature* of any given colony. Ultimately, due to Gates'

[31] See Cecilia Tichi's analysis of sea rhetoric, and particularly Red Sea rhetoric, throughout seventeenth-century New Englanders' discourse, "Spiritual Biography and the 'Lords Remembrancers,'" *William and Mary Quarterly* 3rd ser. 28 (1971): 64-85.

forceful government, Admiral Somers' resourcefulness, and the commoners' general obedience, Strachey portrays the shipwrecked Bermuda group as a worthy representative of England and its church in America. Jamestown, conversely, unmasked its inhabitants for their essentially flawed social identity, what Strachey chalked up to "sloath, riot, and vanity." Given the power of sea narratives to authenticate or expose a group's social identity, combined with their perceived ability to evidence a colony's God-ordained destiny, Winthrop's account of Gibbons begins to take on new meanings for New England.

1637: John Winthrop's Edward Gibbons

"If God be with us, who can be against us?"

—Francis Higginson, *New-Englands Plantation,* 1630

With this horizon of expectations in sight, we can consider what the Gibbons story might have meant for colonists sensitive to these interpretive traditions. As Winthrop's *Journal* formulates the story, parallels to the *Sea Venture'*s plot abound. First, although Edward Gibbons was no Governor Gates, he was much more than a mere sailor. He served as a selectman for Boston, as a deputy to the Massachusetts General Court, and was commander in chief of the Plymouth troops fighting the Narragansetts in 1645.[32] Perhaps even more significantly, he was erroneously credited by some (including the learned colonial traveler, John Josselyn), with having undertaken not one but two

[32] April Lee Hatfield, *Atlantic Virginia: Intercolonial Relations in the Seventeenth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 57.

voyages (in 1614 and 1616) in search of the Northwest Passage.[33] In Winthrop's account, this increasingly important figure, Gibbons, leaves his home port to sail for Bermuda, which in 1612 had joined Virginia as one of England's "marvelous possessions" in the Atlantic. Although pulled off course by tempest, he and his company do not drown. Like the *Sea Venture*'s crew, who feared Bermuda to be a terrible "Ile of Divels," he is driven towards a shore that initially seems much worse than the storm itself: Hispaniola. The inclusion of Hispaniola points to the larger imperial dimensions of this story. Gibbons has drifted into Spanish territory and is more afraid of the Catholic Spanish than of starvation or wild hogs.[34] While melodramatic, this staging reflected the larger political theater which structured the narratives: the European powers' contest for America's territories and, in their public statements at least, for the opportunity to establish the "true" church over the whole earth. Within this international context, the figure of Gibbons plays out the position of a small but stalwart New England attempting to establish its own place in America and quietly striving against the Catholic Spanish in the south and, to the north, the Catholic French.

Here, wedged between the ocean and the Spanish, Gibbons finds providence rather than destruction—or at least the narrative portrays the situation that way. Like the

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[33] John Josselyn, *Two Voyages to New-England* (London, 1674), ed. Paul J. Lindholdt, *John Josselyn, Colonial Traveler: A Critical Edition of* Two Voyages to New-England (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1988), 170-71.

[34] In many narratives, the third term in this triangle of fear is occupied by the "devilish" and "barbarian" natives on shore. Throughout seventeenth-century sea voyage literature, such English castaways are often equally afraid of "cannibal" native peoples and the Spanish, both of whom the travelers fear worse than death on the waters. Equating the Spanish and Indians as threats has the effect in these accounts of positioning the English as striving against the devil in the guise of cannibals on the one hand, and against the antichrist in the form of (Catholic) Spaniards on the other. See, for example, Jonathan Dickinson's combination shipwreck and captivity narrative, *Gods Protecting Providence Man's Surest Help and Defence* (Philadelphia, 1699).

people of Israel standing on dry ground between the walls of the Red Sea, or like Noah and his animals afloat on the flood, Gibbons is miraculously buoyed up when his situation looks most dire. Half-starved, sick from turtles and hogs, afraid of both the open sea and the Spanish-possessed shore before them, Gibbons and his crew are taken by French pirates who, in a quick plot reversal, turn out to be their most generous friends and allies. The turn of events, the narrative implies, could only have been accomplished by divine providence, just as earlier English voyagers such as Martin Frobisher and Sylvester Jourdain had emphasized the impossibility of their situations in order to compel belief that only God could have saved them. So too Gibbons' story finds him stuck between a rock and a hard place—the Spanish and the French,[35] yet in the narrative, these rival nations ultimately become divine tools to show Gibbons—and Winthrop—that God has chosen New England for a greater purpose than death in foreign waters.

Winthrop's final piece of evidence locks the story's meaning into place. He reports that Gibbons is given the pirates' prize—presumably, some other crew's ship—as well as an alligator. Such a gratuitous transfer of wealth and symbolic power would have been a wonder, indeed. Without explicitly having to commit piracy, New England benefited and, indeed, actually profited from one of its competitors. Moreover, crocodilian creatures, according to medieval and early modern lore, were in and of themselves wonders and thus interesting objects of great worth. Adamnan, the seventh-century writer and abbot of the monastery at Iona, had included chapters on strange

[35] For the rhetoric of miraculous deliverance in Frobisher's voyage, see especially Thomas Ellis, *A True Report of the Third and Last Voyage into Metaincognita: atchieved by the worthie Capteine, M. Martine Frobisher, esquire* (London, 1578); and Dionyse Settle, *True Report of the laste voyage into the West and Northwest Regions, &c. c. 1577, worthily atchieved by capteine Frobisher* (London, 1577).

wonders of the Holy Land—particularly crocodiles, miraculous relics, and wild locusts—in his influential *De locis sanctis*, the story of Bishop Arculf's pilgrimage to the Holy Land. A crocodile hung over the Portal of the Lizard in the Cathedral of Seville, given to King Alfonso X in 1260 by the Sultan of Egypt, while another hung in the sixteenth-century chapel of Oiron. Later, the fifteenth-century natural philosopher Marsilio Ficino had included crocodiles with a handful of other exotic objects like gold and carved gems as possessing "occult and wonderful powers" derived from their sympathy with the sun. Collected in cabinets of curiosities (precursors to the modern day museum) and in the private hordes of kings, crocodilians were wonders of nature—mysteries—and as such, objective symbols of power.[36] Although many Protestants showed significant reluctance to ascribe magical powers to totemic objects, even the most pious and serious of them, such as Robert Boyle and Francis Bacon, considered wonders and marvels central both to natural philosophy and to the practice of piety. Throughout the seventeenth century, wonders provided openings to understanding the deeper nature of things and retained a degree of their earlier status as "prodigies," a category of phenomena sometimes indicating God's supernatural or at least preternatural intervention in the world.[37] As such

[36] On Adamnan's interest in wonders, see Campbell, *Witness and the Other World,* 84 and Adamnan, *Adamnan's 'De locis sanctis,'* ed. and trans. Denis Meehan, Scriptores Latini Hiberniae, 3 (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1958). On crocodiles as natural wonders, see Lorraine Daston and Katherine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature,* 84-85, 145.

[37] On the study of wonders by seventeenth-century English natural philosophers such as Boyle and Bacon, see Lorraine Daston, "Marvelous Facts and Miraculous Evidence in Early Modern Europe," *Critical Inquiry* 18 (1991): 93-124, and Daston and Park, "Unnatural Conceptions: The Study of Monsters in Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Century France and England," *Past and Present* 92 (1981): 20-54. See also the woodcut of the Italian naturalist Ferrante Imperato's cabinet of wonders, featuring a prominent crocodile, as represented in his 1659 work *Dell'historia naturale* (Naples, 1599) and reprinted in *New World of Wonders: European Images of the Americas, 1492-1700*, ed. Rachel Doggett with Monique Hulvey and Julie Ainsworth (Washington, D. C.: Folger Shakespeare Library, 1992), 93.

they were not so different from sea providences. Gibbons thus returns home with objective correlatives to his providential experience, objects of economic and symbolic power for his governor and colony. Surely God supported Gibbons and New England.

It is at this point, at the feet of the governor, that the Gibbons tale inverts the famous Strachey story, a deviance that contrasts New England with Virginia to good effect. Strachey had shown how the Jamestown colonists degenerated into little more than beasts when removed from English society. In contrast, Winthrop's *Journal* meticulously documented the New England colonists' orderly self-government and attempted to show how well they had transferred English law, government, and social values, as well as the strongest form of Reformed English Protestantism, onto American soil. With Gibbons' return (signifying the successful conclusion of even the most dangerous of mercantile ventures) and Winthrop's receipt of the pirate's prize and alligator (an almost parodic, early colonial version of symbolic gift exchange between heads of state) Winthrop's narrative implies that his colony, at least, does not need a new source of authority from abroad as did the Virginians.

Like Strachey, Winthrop knew that powerful men in England were paying attention to the news. At roughly the same time as Gibbons' return, ships had arrived from England carrying letters from the commissioners for New England that would have undermined the authority of Massachusetts' General Court. Although nothing came of the affair, their arrival induced enough anxiety that the General Court was forced to see a treason case against a man named Ewre, who had supposedly claimed that "if the king did send any authority hither against our patent, he would be the first should resist him."

The charges against Ewre were eventually dismissed, but the anxiety he articulated surely remained in the minds of many: the colonists had reason to worry about future English interventions.[38]

Although brief, narratives like Gibbons' filled the pages of Winthrop's *Journal,* suggesting a providential connective thread made up of the history's disparate events pulled together into a divine teleology—marching the colony, to borrow the Council for Virginia's words, towards the "consummation" of the "coming of the kingdome of glory." November 17, 1636, for example, saw the conclusion of another such consequential voyage, in which two ships from London delayed at sea by "continual tempests" survived on "short and bad" provisions until Providence helped them (and the two ministers aboard the ships) to reach the shore. "On the sudden," Winthrop reports, "the fog cleared, so as they saw Cape Ann fair on their starboard bow." In spite of the hardships of the voyage, "yet, through the Lord's mercy, did all well."[39] Besides stories about merchants like Gibbons, narratives of dangerous migration voyages—successfully and dramatically concluded—describe the gradual coming into being of the most successful English colony in America, the Massachusetts Bay Colony, shipload by shipload, aided in each case, supposedly, by God. In 1643, after the first decade of colonization, Winthrop was able to claim that God's "preservations and deliverances have been so frequent, to such ships as have carried those of the Lord's family between the two Englands, as would fill a perfect volume to report them all."[40] Woven seamlessly

[38] Winthrop, *Journal,* 228.

[39] Winthrop, *Journal,* 199.

[40] Winthrop, *Journal*, 403.

between accounts of other major challenges successfully resolved without English intervention—challenges such as the colony's external war with the Pequot Indians and its internal "antinomian" controversy—sea providences counterbalanced the colony's many "tempests" and evidenced God's support for New England endeavors. These narratives offered a much-needed assurance amidst trying historical events.

Thus far, this chapter has discussed sea providence writings in primarily secular terms—as publicity pieces supporting their writers' political ambitions. Their religious overtones, however, also played a key role in their larger political uses. Reading Winthrop with this perspective enables us to see how his narrative at once celebrates a political event—the gradual and successful arrival of new colonists for the colony—and a religious one—the providence of God's preserving the ships, their passengers, and their ministers. The religious point here does not merely *disguise* the politics, nor does it simply reflect formulaic narrative convention. To understand these narratives' power, thus, we need to inquire further into how writings about religious experiences, or writings that relied heavily on religious rhetoric, could carry a political tenor without doing so in a merely false way.

To do so, we must recognize the connections between religious and political identities. A legal political identity emerges in early sea-voyage narratives—all of which, at one level, functioned to legitimize English colonial rights. This concern with legal authority and credible government makes its appearance in the Winthrop and Strachey narratives. But in an era when the Pope could "grant" Spain and Portugal rights to the

Americas primarily on the basis of their identity as faithful Catholic regimes, legal identities were always also produced in coordination with social identities. While English settlers argued for their rights to North America based on the technicality of Sebastian Cabot's first discovery,[41] they simultaneously advanced their claims by arguing for their superior social identity. Promoters of colonization insisted that England, rather than Spain or Portugal, carried forth the "true church;" that the English would treat the natives with grace and care rather than with the Spaniards' ferocity; and that the English would "improve" American land rather than strip and exploit it. Given that writers in England and on the continent had long used the ship as a metaphor for society as a whole, it is not surprising that competing groups in the early-modern Atlantic used published stories about sea voyages to represent their social identities and thus advance their politics.

In particular, stories of sea providences played a steady if changing role in English representations of social identities. These stories circulated well beyond the earliest years of English colonization. Their publication rates increased, logically, once the American colonies became more established and transatlantic traffic grew more regular. While form and content remain much the same, the meanings and uses of later stories changed for a new day. They especially changed for groups in which English and European settlers had become born-and-raised residents of, and not merely new migrants to, the Americas.

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[41] Richard Hakluyt on this matter wrote in 1584 that "a very greate and large parte as well of the Ilands was first discovered for the kinge of England by Sebastian Gabote an Englishe man borne in Bristoll, the sonne of John Gabote a venesian, in the yere of our Lorde 1496 . . . so that the Englishemen have more righte thereunto then the Spaniardes, yf to have righte unto a Contrie it sufficeth to have firste seene and discovered the same." *A Discours of Western Planting,* Document 46 in *The Writings and Correspondence of the Two Richard Hakluyts, vol. 2,* Hakluyt Society Series 2, vol. 77 (London, 1935): 293-5.

1684: Increase Mather's Edward Gibbons

By the latter half of the seventeenth century, articulating a public representation of New England's identity as a successfully self-governing, spiritually upright group had become a trickier task. After the 1660s, New England's so-called "jeremiad" sermons had focused almost obsessively on the ways life in colonial America had produced a second generation essentially weaker than their parents. The colonial 1679 Synod went so far as to outline 12 kinds of sin in New England, including "a great and visible decay of the power of Godliness amongst many Professors in these Churches;" civil disruptions, and the decline of communitarian social values.[42]

And yet, as I have argued in the previous chapter, there were those who could find ways to value the American experience and even suggest that it had positively changed American colonists over the course of the century. Such valuations were not to be found in the jeremiad sermons or the histories of first-generation sympathizers like William Hubbard or Nathaniel Morton.[43] They appeared, instead, in the personal narratives told

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[42] *The Necessity of Reformation with the Expedients Subservient Thereunto, Asserted; In Answer to Two Questions I. What Are the Evils That Have Provoked the Lord to Bring His Judgments on New-England? I. What is To Be Done That So Those Evils May Be Reformed? Agreed Upon by the Elders and Messengers of the Churches Assembled in the Synod at Boston in New-England, Sept. 10, 1679*, (Boston: 1679), in *Records of the Governor and Company of the Massachusetts Bay in New England,* vol. 4, part 2, *1661-1674,* ed. Nathaniel B. Shurtleff, (Boston: William White, 1853), 5.

[43] In a recent dissertation, Rachelle Friedman has argued that, in fact, "William Hubbard's *General History of New England* and Nathaniel Morton's *New England's Memorial* did not reflect this sense of failure or 'declension.' Rather, at the same time that the historians exalted the founders, they examined their own times and integrated themselves into the history of New England as equally worthy participants." See "Writing the Wonders: Puritan Historians in Colonial New England" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 1991), 4. The point is arguable. Morton, for example, devotes the latter portions of his history to the deaths of first generation leaders and reports of catastrophic environmental events. He shows little interest and even less enthusiasm for the activities of the second and third generations of colonists.

by ordinary colonists about their experiences in American nature, which the colonists found to be an unpredictable but extraordinarily God-filled space.

Sea-voyage narratives written in this second generation of American colonization began to appear in the 1660s in various forms. Although stories featuring American colonists were printed individually throughout the remainder of the century, the vast majority of published sea providence narratives for this period reached the public through two major anthologies. Enormously popular, the first, *Mr. James Janeway's Legacy to his Friends, Containing Twenty Seven Famous Instances of Gods Providences in and about Sea Dangers and Deliverances, with the Names of Several that were Eye-witnesses to many of them,* was originally published in London in 1674, and then republished multiple times afterwards.[44] Janeway had researched stories of Protestants experiencing divine providence on the high seas. Although his narratives featured protagonists from various European countries, a significant number recounted the fates of New England vessels or events otherwise connected to New England. New Englanders read Janeway and later cited some of his narratives in their own writings. The second anthology was also a kind of bestseller. The first and only compilation of sea voyage stories written *by* second-generation American colonists and, moreover, published *in* an American colony, it appeared in 1684. Edited by Increase Mather and included in his larger collection of

[44] First printed for Dorman Newman in 1674, Janeway's 134-page anthology-plus-sermon was printed again in 1675, an almost exact reprint of the first book. In 1683 Newman printed it again, this time with a page crediting the sermon to "John Ryther, Minister of the Gospel" (see the unnumbered page between pages 87 and 89). In 1698, a slightly modified version of this text was printed as *A Token for Mariners*, by Hugh Newman of London (again, without the Ryther credit). This text added several new narratives, combined others, and at the end, added a series of prayers to be recited at sea. It was re-published at least twice, in 1708 and 1721, and perhaps again later.

providence stories, *An Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences*, the collection of 10 narratives focused on New England's people, ships, or shores.

Perhaps it is not a surprise that one of the first stories to appear in both Janeway's 1674 publication and Mather's 1684 collection recounts the extraordinary voyage of one "Major *Edward Gibbons* of *Boston* in *New England*." Yes, this is our Gibbons, Winthrop's Gibbons, the Gibbons of Bermuda and the pirate's prize and the alligator. Or it is, rather, almost our Gibbons. The story did not remain the same between its first appearance in Winthrop's *Journal* and its inclusion in Mather's *Illustrious Providences*. The editor who first brought Winthrop's complete *Journal* into print, James Savage, wryly remarked in his 1853 edition that "We may judge how the tale of distress gained by frequent telling, till it grew up to 'the wonderful story of Major Gibbons' in [Cotton Mather's] Magnalia" [sic]. In fact, he notes, "[the later narrative] would with difficulty be understood to refer to the same event in our text, were not the sufferer's name, and his relief by a French *pirate*, sufficient marks of identity to turn us . . . back to the first relation, probably received from the adventurers' mouths."[45]

Janeway, who lived in England, could have learned of Gibbons in any number of ways: through his own researches, through Winthrop's text, or through popular legend.[46] Likewise, Mather also may have encountered the narrative by several possible means. He may or may not have had access to Winthrop's manuscripts, which at the time were in the

[45] James Savage in John Winthrop, *The History of New England from 1630-1649*, I, ed. James Savage (Boston, 1853), 270.

[46] Keith Huntress argues that Janeway's anthology was unique not only because it was the first providence anthology exclusively devoted to shipwrecks and disasters at sea, but also because it relied on Janeway's independent research rather than merely reprinting stories that appeared in previously published books. See Huntress, *A Checklist of Narratives of Shipwrecks and Disasters at Sea to 1860,* 11.

hands of William Hubbard of Ipswich, whom Mather apparently disliked. For his part, Mather claimed to have read both Janeway and another published source that contained the story.[47] He also held all the information sent to him by his fellow ministers for the providence collection he was compiling, and prior to any of these text sources, he may have encountered it through oral tradition. It is hard to know where else Gibbons' tale may have appeared once the text left Increase Mather, as the publication and re-publication of sea-providence stories only increased in popularity throughout the eighteenth century. We know, as Savage indicated, that years later Increase's son Cotton Mather would again republish the story in his *Magnalia Christi Americana* (1702).

Nearly fifty years of borrowings and retellings changed the narrative in almost every possible way. In Increase Mather's 1684 version, the distressed travelers never make it to Hispaniola or eat its disgusting turtles and hogs. Rather, they remain becalmed on the undrinkable waters—a more symbolic space outside of normal time and geography. In this place, they slowly begin to starve, leading to the most shocking modification of the original narrative. "One of them," Mather's version reports, "made the sorrowful motion, that they should cast Lots, which of them should die first, to satisfie the ravenous Hunger of the rest."

As contemporaneous reports attest, European travelers widely ascribed the practice of cannibalism to American and African indigenous groups, usually without any

[47] Mather cites "Mr. Burton's *Treatises* lately printed" for this second source. Mather, *Essay,* 2. The claim remains a bibliographical puzzle. Although the seminal works of William Burton, a Bristol minister and preacher, were collected together and published in 1602 as *The Sermons and Treatises of Maister Burton,* Burton is supposed to have died in 1616, and so would not have known about Gibbon's story. It is possible that one of Burton's editors added the Gibbons story to a later, posthumous edition of the *Treatises*, but I have found no such later edition.

substantiating evidence. The cannibal was thus figured as one of the most horrifying potential results of a European's transformation by American influences.[48] At the same time, Mather did not have to remind readers of Jonah, literally devoured by the sea after lots determined that he had brought down God's wrath on the ship. Between the Jonah story, which implicated the chosen man as guilty as determined by lots, and the English abhorrence for cannibalism, Gibbons' ship has ceased to be populated by the innocents of Winthrop's version. Thus by lot, a man is chosen to be executed and consumed by the soon-to-be English cannibals. "Life being sweet, Skin for Skin, and all a man hath will he give for his life," the Janeway version adds—even his humanity, his innocence, or his identity as an Englishman.[49] Before the travelers fall to cannibalism, however, they pray to God for deliverance, and miraculously, "there leapt a mighty Fish into the Boat, which was a double joy to them, not only in relieving their miserable hunger, which no doubt made them quick Cooks, but because they looked upon it to be sent from God, and to be a token of their Deliverance." A kind of trial, thus, has successfully been passed, if just barely.

Yet soon enough, hunger returns. A second time they fall first to lots for cannibalism, and then to prayer, only to be rescued at the last moment when a "great bird

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[48] On European fears of being transformed by America, see Bach, *Colonial Transformations,* and Canup, *Out of the Wilderness*. For two paradigmatic examples of how representations of cannibalism structured English representations of indigenous populations, see the final narrative in Janeway's *Legacy,* 75-87—the story of 18-year-old John Watts' captivity among Africans in Guinea—and Jonathan Dickinson's *Gods Protecting Providence Man's Surest Help and Defence In the times Of the greatest difficulty and most Imminent danger: Evidenced in the Remarkable Deliverance Of divers Persons From the devouring Waves of the Sea, amongst which they Suffered Shipwrack. And also From the more cruelly devouring jawes of the inhumane Canibals of Florida* (Philadelphia, 1699), which portrays the Quaker Dickinson along with his family, friends, and household slaves enduring extended captivity amongst a series of Indian towns in Florida.

[49] Janeway, *Legacy*, 3.

lights, and fixes it self upon the Mast: which one of the Company espies, and he goes, and there she stands, till he took her with his hand by the wing. This was life from the dead the second time." After a third sequence of lots and then prayer, a ship appears on the horizon. Three symbolic trials have been passed. At last Gibbons and company draw up alongside the mysterious vessel which, in another dramatic turn, discovers itself to be a dreaded French pirate ship. In the reversal familiar from Winthrop's account, however, the commander knows Gibbons, "from whom he had received some signal kindnesses formerly at Boston,"[50] and gallantly declares that "not a hair of you or your Company shall perish, if it ly in my power to preserve you."[51]

Though radically different, this later version of the story was by no means new. A Jesuit's 1649 story of a sea providence off the coast of Newfoundland contains almost the exact same plot.[52] Although the Jesuit story, ironically, may have influenced the popular Protestant story of Gibbons, it probably did so simply by reinforcing the already standard morphology for sea-providence narratives. The later Gibbons story (in which the merchant Gibbons had become "Major Gibbons") combines stock elements of seventeenth-century sea-providence narratives in a creative mix. Starvation while becalmed at sea was at least as common a theme as violent shipwreck. Both plots often

[50] Janeway's version of the story actually suggests that Gibbons had saved this man's life previously. Janeway, *Legacy*, 3.

[51] Mather, *Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences*, 15, 15-16, 16, 17.

[52] As with other shipwreck stories, it is hard to document an exact "author" for this Jesuit narrative. It appeared in the second edition of Father Paul Ragueneau's *Relation de ce qui s'est passé en en la Mission des Peres de la Compagnie de Iusus aux Hurons, pays de la Nouuelle France, és années 1648. & 1649,* originally published in Paris in 1650. See the editor's brief comments in Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed., *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents: Travels and Explorations of the Jesuit Missionaries in New France, 1610-1791*, vol. 34 (Cleveland: Burrows Brothers Company, 1898), 17. The shipwreck narrative itself appears on pages 229-235.

center on food needs and show English protagonists reduced to eating practices they have formerly associated with "barbarous" peoples—sucking blood from a shark's belly, fighting over rats, or eating hogs and turtles. In one of the most common features of early American sea-providence stories, the voyagers, who regularly characterize all indigenous Americans as "barbarous cannibals," often decide that they have no choice for survival except to turn cannibal themselves. Lot-choosing also reappears in these stories. Equally recurrent is the Gibbons narrative's final sequence, in which an individual or group considered more dangerous than death—pirates, Spaniards, or "barbarous" Indians—become the instruments of delivery.

Yet in the later versions of the story as compiled by Janeway and especially Mather, the standard elements get re-organized to support a new interpretive framework. In both Winthrop's and Mather's versions of the story, Gibbons' survival is presented as a providential miracle. And yet only the later version shows how the increasingly dire situation brings to light a flawed characteristic of Gibbons and his shipmates, one requiring reformation. This later version of the story homes in on spiritual weakness when the Englishmen show themselves willing to commit abominable acts but unwilling to rely on God. Unable to see how they may be otherwise delivered, they rely on their own all-too-human means for self-preservation: lot-drawing (a form of divination, condemned by the church), murder, then cannibalism. They even decide to kill the unlucky man *before* they ever think to turn to prayer, and when they finally pray, they do so primarily to delay what they consider to be their inevitable last resort.

Mather emphasizes the stubbornness of their error: "But Alas! The Fish is soon eaten, and their former Exigencies come upon them, which sink their spirits into despair; for they know not of another Morsel." Having been rescued once, they fail to learn the lesson and so return to the lots. Rescued again, they soon despair a third time. In this third round, however, they are portrayed as turning to God more fully than before. "They go to God, their former Friend in adversity, by humble and hearty Prayers," and then expectantly look about for food to arrive, "but there is nothing: Their prayers are concluded, and nothing appears." By this time, however, they have begun to learn better how to wait on God. Although moments ago they quickly "were going to the heart-breaking work, to put him to death whom the Lot fell upon," their approach has been changed. Mather reports that, even after having seen nothing, "still they hoped and stayed; till at last one of them espies a Ship, which put new life into all their spirits." It is at *this* moment that the story reaches climax for Mather, rather than at the actual moment of rescue: "And accordingly he relieveth them, and sets them safe on shoar."[53] Their spirits have acquired new life. They have been transformed through their hard-won lesson to rely on God rather than their own means.

Mather's version of the story is more explicitly providential than his predecessor's and, more importantly, *uses* Providence differently. Rather than providing evidence for God's approval of the adventurer's political plans, the narrative portrays God as intensely interested in individual colonists' subjective spiritual development. Its focus thus shifts from directly confirming New England's project and, instead,

[53] Mather, *Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences*, 16-17.

emphasizes its colonists' need for change: New Englanders require spiritual transformation through experiences in American nature. As a result, the story ends not with a prize and alligator set in the hands of the governor (a valuable political outcome), but with the small group's relief from spiritual travail (a valuable subjective experience). The earlier, realistic account of Gibbons' journey has thus become more figured in its later versions, and this figuration works first to critique the colonists and then to show their spiritual awakening in America.

Although different, again, this orientation is not new. Alan Howard has argued that a pattern of humiliation-deliverance-awakening fundamentally structures William Bradford's history of Plymouth colony, *Of Plymouth Plantation* (which, like Winthrop's *Journal*, did not see print until many years after its composition).[54] Howard argues that "the beginning of *Plymouth Plantation* introduces a rhythmic succession of events that strike over and over again the same note of warning: man, relying on his own strength, must ultimately fail. In failure, however, there is latent the possibility for true success, for in it man may be forced to acknowledge that his real strength rests in God."[55] Humiliation followed by deliverance was and remains, of course, a standard trope in Christian historiography and literature. We should not, however, allow the predictable form to distract us from the altered emphasis. Unlike Bradford's history, Mather's narrative allots ample space for readers to relive the travelers' felt experience, moment-by-moment, as

[54] Bradford was first printed in *History of Plymouth Plantation. Now first printed from the original manuscript, for the Massachusetts Historical Society* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1856).

[55] Alan B. Howard, "Art and History in Bradford's *Of Plymouth Plantation*," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser. 28 (1971): 245. See also Parker H. Johnson, "Humiliation Followed by Deliverance: Metaphor and Plot in Cotton Mather's *Magnalia,*" *Early American Literature* 15(1980-81): 237-246.

the plot unfolds. The three-part sequence delays the narrative's resolution, and in fact, the narrative spends no time reflecting on the lesson learned.

Such a shift in emphasis changed the narratives' meanings in fundamental ways. Anthologies like Janeway's or Mather's did not *merely* offer pious lessons in the value of humility before God (as one of their only scholarly critics, James Hartman, has argued), although they worked at that level, too.[56] Rather, their elaboration and dramatization of travelers' experiences, almost wholly stripped of didactic editorial apparatus, enabled them to provide a kind of affective experience for readers. Their stories' voyeuristic qualities encouraged readers to look on with fascination and disgust at the awkward and desperate straits to which other colonists had been reduced, while experiencing along with them the fear, fright, and eventual relief of the voyage. Seen in this way, the narratives' sensational details and melodramatic plots did not simply pander to popular audiences seeking thrills. Rather, they carried out a purposive rhetorical operation: to fortify the narratives' affective force in fostering the reader's personal familiarity with the experience of disaster and providential rescue. Protestant theologians had long sought to amplify their sermons' affective force on audiences, and some of seventeenth-century New England's own star clergy were renowned for their ability to create an aural space in which the congregation might undergo conversion.[57] However, besides serving any kind

[56] "The providence tale was created to reassert God's existence, and thus, whenever its peculiar matrix of tropes is reassembled, God, or some sense of divinity, sublimity, or holiness, is also being invoked, in conjunction with post-Enlightenment beliefs in empirical proof," he insists. See James Hartman, *Providence Tales*, 11.

[57] The peculiar influence John Cotton held over audiences, for example, has been explained by several scholars as emanating from his affective, rather than merely didactic, use of sermon rhetoric, creating for audiences a realm in which to experience grace and conversion, rather than to think intellectually about it.

of pastoral purpose, this affective rhetorical mechanism also reflected and appropriated developments in new-world travel writing.

Foregrounding the experience itself rather than its outcome, conveying it as vividly as possible through affective devices, drawing the voyeuristic reader into his or her own narrative experience of the violent American natural world and spiritual awakening—the text exhibits the defining characteristics of what Mary B. Campbell has identified as the travel narrative in its modern form. In travel writing, these emphases first emerged, she argues, near the end of the early Euroepan exploration era in Sir Walter Ralegh's 1596 *Discovery of the Large, Rich, and Bewtiful Empire of Guiana, with a Relation of the Great and Golden City of Manoa (which the Spaniards call El Dorado)* . . . . Key formal differences marked Ralegh's literary departure from the likes of Columbus's journal and letters, Marco Polo's *Description*, *Mandeville's Travels*, medieval pilgrims' *peregrationes*, or the encyclopedias of exotic foreign wonders. These differences included his use of first-person narrative or at least a first-person perspective, his focus on the individual traveler's experiences, and his expression of these experiences through narrative. Such features differed from previous writers' purportedly neutral third-person records, which focused on factual objects and places, and which were encyclopedically arranged, rather than chronologically narrated, to create a sense of comprehensive knowledge. Ralegh's rhetorical approaches were so new as to be almost unrecognizable. Writes Campbell, "The habit of elaborating travel from desire has been

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See Eugenia DeLamotte's "John Cotton and the Rhetoric of Grace," *Early American Literature* 21 (1986): 49-74; and Teresa Toulouse, *The Art of Prophesying: New England Sermons and the Shaping of Belief* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1987), 13-45.

consistent, as has, apparently, the habit of substituting a text for the elusive object of desire. But the nature of the object has changed utterly, and with it ways of representing it, of alluring the reader to it."[58]

But by the time Gibbons made his second major appearance in a New England leader's book, these tactics had become more established. The first Gibbons story's attention to sensational details in a dangerously real physical setting here unites with a simultaneous attention to internal, subjective, spiritual experience. The net effect of such differences, Campbell notes, is to produce a voyage account "that is both palpable and frankly subjective," one that helps to address "a basic problem of early overseas literature . . .: how does one convey that subjectively true sense of the marvelous and at the same time keep the reporter's cardinal goal of conveying objective truth?" The answer, she concludes, lay in shifting the form "from depiction of abstract or uninhabited fact to the relation of the narratable facts of experience." According to this model, the travel writer ceases to be a lofty epic hero as Columbus had styled himself, or as Winthrop and subsequent writers had characterized New England's leading first generation emigrants. Instead, the travel writer becomes "one of us," a more (and mere) novelistic protagonist, in Bakhtin's distinction, whose story is based on "personal experience and thought" and is valuable for precisely those qualities.[59]

It is hard to dispute *that* Mather's version of the Gibbons tale emphasized the value of experience and amplified readers' vicarious share in the protagonists' experience. *Why* these later narratives were structured to do so proves a more

[58] Campbell, *Witness and the Other World*, 237.

[59] Campbell, *Witness and the Other World*, 11, 219, 235.

complicated and ultimately speculative question, but one that can be approached with some rigor. While Campbell ascribes Ralegh's techniques to his desire to be loved, and while we might chalk up Mather's editing to a pastoral concern for New England's laity, we ought also to consider how such narrative techniques would have been positioned to perform a kind of political persuasion. Campbell's work enables us to situate the 1684 Gibbons narrative on a timeline of changing travel discourse which, by the mid-seventeenth century, was well on its way to becoming the central rhetorical model for discourses of knowledge "discovery," as shown by the Royal Society's adoption of travel writing protocol to structure scientific observation reports. Mather's text thus exhibits facility with a new and increasingly authoritative form which, especially in the shape Ralegh helped to develop, placed its author / narrator in a position of privileged authority not for his class, educational background, or connections to power, but for his new experiences in foreign territories. As Campbell has noted at the beginning of her study, "neither power nor talent gives a travel writer his or her authority, which comes only and crucially from experience."[60] To draw on this emerging narrative form was to draw on a genre in which marginalized colonial experiences gave one extra, rather than reduced, authority and value for metropolitan readers.

To possess authority and credibility is one thing. To use these commodities effectively is another. Unlike the narratives recounted in Thomas Shepard's records of his New England parish, the sea providence spiritual conversion experiences abound in details not merely about subjective states, but also about the American and Atlantic

[60] Campbell, *Witness and the Other World,* 3.

physical setting. The combined effect of both "palpable and frankly subjective" narration would have suggested an organic spiritual connection between American nature—a nature feared or at least viewed with suspicion by many in England—and saving spirituality. In these narratives, American nature's very distance from the established structures of English or European society provides, as it would later for Jonathan Edwards and Henry David Thoreau, the critically necessary (if not wholly sufficient) condition for a true spiritual awakening, and thus ultimately, for the establishment of a renewed social community. Had the narratives restricted themselves to providing pious lessons, they would only have suggested what countless other books in England and all over Europe suggested— that good Protestants ought to undergo a meaningful conversion experience. By returning the focus to the experience itself and its details, all set in the most dangerous and unknown geography of the American colonies, the narratives were able to suggest something more subtle but crucial: that certain locations were better at prompting transformative spiritual experiences, and that these kinds of transformative experiences were abundant in socially-remote America and in activities related to colonizing it.

This change in narrative purpose suited the tenor of the time. The New England colonies' second and third generations were accused by their own preachers of needing a revival. At the same time, their contemporaries in England had begun to further compromise the Protestant ideals that had failed to take hold during the Puritan Revolution, a process cemented in the so-called "Glorious Revolution" (1688) with William's and Mary's installment on the English throne. The need for spiritually reviving

experiences, thus, was not unique to American colonists in the era of the jeremiad, nor was this religious need separate from the period's pressing political concerns. Moreover, foregrounding the narrative's spiritual experiences rather than its pious lesson enabled a second generation colonist like Mather to reinterpret what it meant to be transformed by America. Rather than figuring such transformation as a degeneration or alienation from English bodily nature and English culture, the Gibbons story presents transformation as a necessary good, and America, instead of turning its colonists into barbarians, thus becomes a key location for renewing English society.

Anthony Thacher's American Experience

> "I must turn my drowned Pen and shaking Hand to Indite the Story of such sad News as never before this hapned in *New-England*."
>
> —Anthony Thacher, 1635

The 1684 Gibbons narrative was not alone in its rhetorical tactics. It was accompanied by an entire, albeit small, genre of wondrous sea-travel writing produced in the seventeenth-century English colonies. In the second half of the seventeenth century alone—the era of New England's first American-born generations—many sea wonder narratives appeared in published books, pamphlets, or widely circulated manuscripts.[61]

[61] For a valuable but incomplete bibliography of narratives during this period published in England, see Keith Huntress, *A Checklist of Narratives of Shipwrecks and Disasters at Sea to 1860*. Like Robert Foulke's chronology, however, Huntress slights the seventeenth century and pays almost no attention to narratives produced from within the American colonies.

For these seventeenth-century texts, in addition to the narratives included in large histories such as Edward Johnsons' *Wonder-Working Providence of Sions Saviour in New England* (London, 1654), Nathaniel Morton's *New England's Memoriall* (Cambridge, 1669), and William Hubbard's "General History of New England" (manuscript, completed in 1680), see Benjamin Bartholomew's manuscript poem

The writings continued into the eighteenth century where their numbers eventually exploded as the genre grew even more popular.

The period's texts, admittedly, display a diverse range of narrative patterns. Some offer classic piety exempla, as when Cotton Mather reports on a "praying and pious company" adrift at sea, and "when *these poor men cry'd unto the Lord, he heard and sav'd them.*"[62] Many of the narratives continue to argue, like the earliest English explorers, for the miraculousness of the colonists' preservation in the midst of overwhelming dangers, a preservation only explainable as God's intervention. Yet as a

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"A relation of the Wonderful Mercies of God Extended hunto us the 19 of October 1660 in the Ship Exchang being bound from Newingland to Barbadoes," and from an anonymous writer in 1674, "The narrative of the most dreadful tempest, hurricane, or earthquake in Holland . . . the 22 of July last . . ." (Cambridge, 1674). Many writers employed a theological framework for their materials. In 1675, Increase Mather published *The Times of Men Are in the Hand of God; or, A Sermon Occasioned by That Awfull Providence Which Hapned in Boston in New England the Fourth Day of the Third Month 1675 (When Part of a Vessel was Blown Up in the Harbor, and Nine Men Hurt, and Three Mortally Wounded) Wherein is Shewed How We Should Sanctifie the Dreadfull Name of God Under Such Awful Dispensation* (Boston, 1675), while John Wilson reminded New Englanders of the sea providence that smashed the 1588 Spanish Armada in his 1681 *A Song of Deliverance for the Lasting Remembrance of God's Wonderful Works, Never To Be Forgotten. Containing in It the Wonderful Defeat of the Spanish-Armado, Anno, 1588, etc.* (Boston, 1681). Two years later, Richard Steere's poem appeared, *A Monumental Memorial of Marine Mercy Being an Acknowledgment of an High Hand of Divine Deliverance on the Deep in the Time of Distress, in a Late Voyage from Boston in New-England to London, Anno 1683* (Boston, 1684).

In a similar vein, Increase Mather's *Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences* also appeared in 1684, including in its sea deliverance chapter Anthony Thacher's story as well as Gibbons and 8 additional narratives. In the year 1689, Cotton Mather's many published sermons included one devoted to colonial sea travel activities, *Work Upon the Ark. Meditations upon the Ark as a Type of the Church; Delivered in a Sermon at Boston, and Now Dedicated unto the Service of All But Especially of Those Whose Concerns Lye in Ships* (Boston, 1689), and several years later in the *Magnalia Christi Americana* (London, 1702) he devoted the first chapter of the sixth book to "Christus super aquas: relating wonderful sea-deliverances." Additionally, one of the more famous shipwreck narratives of the century was actually written by a Quaker and published in Philadelphia, but the sensational story would have been available to many New Englanders as well: Jonathan Dickinson's *Gods Protecting Providence Man's Surest Help and Defence In the times Of the greatest difficulty and most Imminent danger: Evidenced in the Remarkable Deliverance Of divers Persons From the devouring Waves of the Sea, amongst which they Suffered Shipwrack. And also From the more cruelly devouring jawes of the inhumane Canibals of Florida. Faithfully related by one of the persons concerned therein, Jonathan Dickinson* (Philadelphia, 1699).

[62] Cotton Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana*, II, 304-05.

whole they indicate an increased interest in subjective spiritual transformation, rather than in the voyage's final outcome. Richard Steere, for example, writes that

> Had we continu'd *thus* [successfully] upon the Deep
> We had bin Charm'd into a drowsie sleep
> Of calme Security, nor had we known
> The Excellence of *PRESERVATION;*
> We had been Dumb and silent to Express
> Affectedly the Voy'ges good success.
> But to awake and Rowse our sleepy minds
> The *Po'wrs* above let loose th' unruly winds.[63]

His material had been shaped to meditate self-reflectively on the subjective meaning of his experience.

By the mid-eighteenth century, the notion that sailors turned to God under the stress of a sea trial had already become so formulaic that it could be treated as a joke, as when an unknown writer published a broadside "Description of a Great Sea-Storm," noting that

> What *Holy Church* ne're could, Rough Seas hav[e done]
> Made *Sea-men* buckle to Devotion,
> And force from them their *Letany*, whilst thus
> They whimper out, *Good Lord deliver us!*
> So pray I too, good Lord deliver thee

[63] Steere, *Monumental Memorial of Marine Mercy,* 135.

Dear Friend, from being taught to Pray at S[ea].[64]

We see in his mockery a shadow of the genre's future: R. Thomas's nearly self-parodic *Remarkable Shipwrecks, Fires, Calamities, Providential Deliverances, and Lamentable Disasters on the Seas* (1836). Thomas's book became a bestselling exemplum of how the popular genre, produced on a mass scale according to a repeatable formula, used representations of spiritual distress as stock sentimental tools to heighten the narratives' melodramatic effect. Yet while the trope of spiritual awakening in American nature could fuel the melodrama of R. Thomas's "lamentable disasters," it could also underpin the political power of captivity narratives such as Mary Rowlandson's *Soveraignty and Goodness of God* (1682) or *An Authentic Narrative of the Shipwreck and Sufferings of Mrs. Eliza Bradley* (1821). Both of these influential texts constructed race relations between Europeans and either Indians or Africans, and they did so by figuring the new world wilderness as serving Europeans' spiritual development.

The defining example of how the sea providence narrative changed form—and an extraordinary instance of this new form's unformulaic potential—appears in the narrative of Anthony Thacher's shipwreck, with which Increase Mather opened his entire providence collection. Like Gibbons, Thacher had traveled to America during the early years of New England colonization and his harrowing experience was briefly recorded in John Winthrop's *Journal.* And like Gibbons' story, Thacher's account circulated for years in manuscript before seeing its earliest New England publication in Mather's 1684

[64] "A Description of a Great Sea-Storm, That happened to some Ships in the Gulph of Florida, in September last; Drawn up by one of the Company, and sent to his Friend at London" (London, 1671).

book.[65] Unlike Gibbons, however, Thacher recorded his own experience rather than suffering others to write it, and perhaps more importantly, he focused his account on the intense subjective experience of the shipwreck itself, rather than on its outcome or any lessons learned. The fact of his first-hand authorship, which Mather emphasized in his collection, makes itself felt in every line, exhibiting a full realization of the formal changes that critically but incompletely reshaped the Gibbons account.

Anthony Thacher arrived in New England with his wife, four children and servant, along with his cousin, one Mr. Avery, in 1635. Avery's family was also large, including six children, according to Winthrop, and three other individuals, perhaps servants. Almost immediately after arriving, Avery, a minister, was invited to Marblehead, a fishing town with no church. Close friends, Avery and Thacher considered the offer together. "There was a League of perpetual Friendship between my Cousin *Avery* . . . and my self never to forsake each other to the Death, but to be partakers of each others misery or welfare," Thacher anticipates, "as also of habitation in the same place." Although they initially rejected the town's offer, unwilling to set themselves and their families down amongst "many there (the most being Fishermen) [who] were something loose and remiss in their behaviour," they were later persuaded "by the

[65] Anthony Thacher's narrative has appeared in print several times since Mather included it in his collection. Although Cotton Mather does not include it in his *Magnalia Christi Americana*, he does reference the narrative in his "Life of Mr. Thomas Thacher," Book III, chapter XXVI. The narrative also appears in Alexander Young, *Chronicles of the First Planters of the Colony of Massachusetts Bay, From 1623 to 1636* (Boston: Charles C. Little and James Brown, 1846), 483-95. Most recently, it appeared in Donald P. Wharton, ed., *In the Trough of the Sea: Selected American Sea-Deliverance Narratives, 1610-1766* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1979), 56-64. In addition, a manuscript version, slightly longer than the Mather version, resides in the British Library. Everett Emerson provided a modernized version of it in his *Letters from New England* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1976). See also John Winthrop's brief mention of the event in the *Journal*: 152-53.

Magistrates, and by Mr. *Cotton,* and most of the Ministers" to serve a population in need of some religion. They embark on August 11, 1635, at Ipswich, "bound for Marble-head," twenty-three people total on board.[66]

When the storm hits, the narrative lists a familiar sequence of maritime disasters, none unique to Thacher's story. In the night, the ship's anchor is lost, leaving the ship at the mercy of the wind and waves. The cresting waves eventually lift the ship onto rocks, where it lies wedged (just as in Strachey's narrative) while the waves crash upon it, "beat[ing] her all to pieces." Soon the situation appears hopeless: "In the same room whereas he sat, the Master of the Pinnace not knowing what to do, our fore-Mast was cut down, our main-Mast broken in three pieces, the fore part of the Pinnace beat away, our Goods swimming about the Seas, my Children bewailing me, as not pitying themselves, and my self bemoaning them."[67]

The presence of Thacher's and his cousin's children distinguish the story from many others in the sea-providence genre. Few of the narratives published individually by Janeway or by the Mathers feature the fate of an entire extended family. Instead, they generally focus on merchants or mariners whose lives, though bound together, are not described as the intimate "League of perpetual Friendship" between Thacher and his cousin (Avery), or as a parent's love for his children. These bonds of intimate love, and particularly the responsibility Thacher feels towards his innocent children, cause him to focus the story on his experience of suffering and inhibit him from moving beyond it to consider the outcome of the event or to posit any more general meaning for it. Whereas

[66] Anthony Thacher in Increase Mather, *Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences*, 3-4.

[67] Thacher, *Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences,* 6.

Gibbons and his crew were able to move from humiliation towards awakening by learning the lessons of their first two trials, Thacher's humiliation refuses to resolve itself into any forward-moving lessons. At a point where other narrators might begin to search themselves for the sins that had provoked God to rage, Thacher finds only overwhelming grief that he had endangered his innocent children, "poor Souls, whom I had occasioned to such an end in their tender years, whenas they could scarce be sensible of death." Far from setting up the narrative as a pious moral, he suggests an image of the slaughter of the innocents.[68]

Once on shore with his wife—of the 23 on board, only they survived—Thacher has time to reflect further on what has happened, but even then his powerful subjective experience continues, unresolved into the conclusion of plot. He is unable systematically to account for these events. While in the midst of the storm, he and his cousin were willing to see the event as God's "pleasure," perhaps to punish their unthankfulness for former deliverances, perhaps to prod them to demonstrate their faith that "he hath promised to deliver us from sin and condemnation, and to bring us safe to heaven"—which promise is, in Thacher's words, "all the deliverance I now desire and expect." And yet by the time Thacher finds himself on shore alone with his wife, he cannot help but feel that his children's drowning is "so untimely (if I may so term it without offence)"—a position that he is unable to abandon even as he forces himself to "proceed on in the Relation of Gods goodness unto me." He recalls striking images of his children as he last saw them—"my little Babe (Ah poor *Peter*) sitting in his Sister *Ediths* arms, who to the

[68] Thacher, *Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences,* 6.

uttermost of her power sheltred him from the waters, my poor *William* standing close unto them, all three of them looking ruefully on me on the Rock . . . Oh I yet see their cheeks, poor silent Lambs, pleading pity and help at my hands"—and at first is unable to see the event as anything more than a terrible mistake. "Then it came to my mind how I had occasioned the Death of my Children, who caused them to leave their native Land, who might have left them there, yea, and might have sent some of them back again and cost me nothing: these and such like thoughts do press down my heart very much."[69]

The rhetorical power of Thacher's narrative thus lies in the unquieted clamor of his suffering, not in portrayals of spiritual awakening. Although he shows himself aware of the humiliation-deliverance-awakening plot trajectory into which his providence story ought to fit, he cannot execute it in form. While the final portion of Thacher's narrative returns to a more providential framework to seek solace in a general view beyond his own grief, referring to the "new lives which [Thacher and his wife] had lately given unto us," Thacher's "drowned pen" must return once more to an image of death before quitting: "In the Ile lieth buried the body of my Cousins eldest Daughter, whom I found dead on the shoar. On the Tuesday following in the afternoon we arrived at *Marble-head.*"[70]

Although all sea-providence narratives relied on a notion of redemptive violence as the mechanism through which God approved, tried, or condemned a social group, in

[69] Thacher, *Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences,* 8, 13, 13.

[70] Thacher, *Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences,* 14.

Thacher's case the violence is so profound as to be almost unnameable.[71] It is certainly irreducible. The traumatic experience of the physical and emotional violence itself, rather than his eventual relief from it, takes the foreground. Thacher's unwillingness to label the event as a punishment or a preservation demonstrates a kind of interpretive silence in the face of God's providences that, although rare in earlier histories, appears with increasing frequency in Increase Mather's collection and in related writing about wonders during the later seventeenth century. "I must turn my drowned Pen and shaking Hand to Indite the Story of such sad News as never before this hapned in *New-England,*" Thacher dramatically begins as he draws his readers in to his experience. But he is unable or unwilling to do *more* than "indite" his story; he cannot convincingly redact it into a lesson or a proof of God's attitudes.

The silences of Thacher's narrative are not total, however. Where it refuses to speak in interpretive glosses, it yet encourages its readers to feel and experience the disaster, and the feelings it attempts to convey are not without broader social and political import. It appears silent only because its meaning has been shifted so thoroughly into the first-person narrator's impressions of his experience. Thacher's narrator has refused to elevate himself into a lesson-learning hero. Rather, he remains as "one of us," in Bakhtin's novelistic plane where his suffering enables us to more fully identify with his perspective than in any previous text we have discussed.

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[71] The definitive discussion of redemptive violence in American literatures remains Richard Slotkin's 3-book study, *Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1860* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1973); *The Fatal Environment: The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization, 1800-1890* (New York: Athenaeum, 1985); and *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Athenaeum, 1992).

What Thacher feels, in addition to loss and confusion, is a clear sense of having been chosen to survive and of being set forth, with his wife, to start a new life with nothing but the basic tools God has allotted them. Moreover, the means by which God has chosen and equipped his wife and him, he senses, are the "wonders in the deep"—here figured specifically as a divine presence in the American Atlantic. The story locates these waters as the place where Thacher had his most memorable and searing encounter with God. Unlike Jacob, Thacher may not have successfully wrestled the angel into giving him the exactly the blessing he sought. And yet Thacher did not fall in the struggle, like those around him. Instead, it is in this watery chaos that he paradoxically finds his firmest footing.

While beginning to drown, Thacher writes, "I had my senses remaining perfect with me all the time that I was under and in water, who at that instant lifted my head above the top of the water, that so I might breathe without any hindrance by the waters. I stood bolt upright as if I had stood upon my feet, but I felt no bottom, nor had any footing for to stand upon, but the waters." Thacher's perception of his confusing and chaotic experience here presents itself in the form of a miracle: he walks on water.[72]

We thus hear an echo of Sylvester Jourdain and William Crashawe, who saw the *Sea Venture's* preservation on Bermuda as a clear sign of God's support for their work. For them, Virginia was thereby marked as God's chosen colony. Thacher is similarly presented as chosen in the final paragraphs of his story. We hear also an echo of the later Gibbons story, in which the uncertainties and dangers of the American natural space,

[72] Thacher, *Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences,* 8, 11.

especially as experienced in the colony's earliest years, become tools in the colonists' ongoing transformation and reformation, even when the violence is so profound that they cannot name the meaning of the transformation beyond showing how they found God amidst the experience. Thacher thus takes the theme common to sea-providence narratives and makes it the central motif of his narrative, as well: it is in the wilderness, and in the chaotic waters, that the colonists get their footing pulled out from beneath them, a situation requiring them to find firmer ground in God, or to drown.

We hear these refrains in Thacher, however, differently. His account creates a sense that in American nature, the encounter with God is fundamentally different than the previously established plots for spiritual awakenings can describe. It does so, as we have noted, by using a vividly narrative approach (whereby we relive his experiences and identify with his suffering) and by reducing the didactic framing devices that set up and resolved sea providences into an outcome or lesson. The result conveys an experience almost mystical, essential and elemental in ways that spiritual experiences could not be in English society or English nature. No wonder, then, that the family is stripped away, leaving a man and his wife, the most elemental social unit. Thacher's narrative testifies to a more sophisticated analysis of the purpose of New England as manifested in the lives of those suffering such events: that God is vibrantly present in the "new world," although divine providences sometimes remain inscrutable. In fact, it also suggests that it is *only* in this new world, departing from one's past environments and social relations, that one can encounter God with the kind of explosive directness so gripping in Thacher's account. With his narrative, we see a thoroughly exceptionalist portrayal of America as a unique

spiritual space for reformed community. Thacher's story thus opens in the Atlantic seas with an intimation of the slaughter of the innocents, but ends on the American shore with a reenactment of Adam and Eve, stripped of innocence but equipped with a promise as they walk east of Eden to establish human history on earth, including America. Formulated in this way, these later seventeenth-century narratives offer a story for American-born colonists. They present a public image of a people who have been shattered and irreversibly altered by their American experience, an experience that has not lead to a falling away from Englishness, but to a conversion to *new* English Protestantism, a new and more immediate engagement with God's Providence.

As a mere writer, of course, Thacher lacked final control of his story's social function or even its implied argument. That power would be appropriated by Increase Mather, whose editing of the text and inclusion of it in a wonder anthology controlled the circumstances and interpretive framework by which most readers encountered Thacher. Mather's purposes were what brought Thacher into print finally in 1684, after so many years in manuscript, and it was Mather who chose to present Thacher as the introductory case in a compilation of wonders carefully classified, documented, and preserved in ink. In this light, we can recognize what might at first seem a contradiction: that Thacher recorded his transformative experience well before leading second generation clergy like Mather made the case for American exceptionalism based on experience of American nature. Like those encounters amply recorded by William Bradford's *Of Plymouth Plantation*, New England colonists' subjective experiences of America may not have drastically changed over the first 50 years of colonization. What did change, I have tried

to show, was how the colonial experience was represented in public forums, particularly print. Perhaps "neither power nor talent gives a travel writer his or her authority, which comes only and crucially from experience"—but ultimately, even that authority would be controlled by when, how and by whom it was edited and published.[73]

James Janeway's Protestants: Scottish, Flemish, English, or Dutch

> "Intending to present the World to the World in the most certaine view, I thought a World of Authors fitter for that purpose then any One Author writing of the World."
>
> —Samuel Purchas, *Purchas His Pilgrimes,* 1625

Editors did not merely modify individual stories. Anthologizers like James Janeway, Increase Mather, or Cotton Mather used the individual tales to draw a broader representation of the entire community.

By widening the view to include a broad array of voyages and actors, the anthology could downplay the personal idiosyncracies of any individual sea captain or traveler and focus more on the generalizable characteristics and experiences of travelers from a particular country. Earlier popular travel accounts, such as Marco Polo's *Description of the World* or even the later 1632 text of William Lithgow's *Rare Adventures,*[74] featured the collected adventures of a single traveler or set of traveler-protagonists. Wondrous sea-voyage anthologies, however, often presented Englishmen *as*

[73] Campbell, *Witness and the Other World,* 3.

[74] William Lithgow, *The Totall Discourse of the Rare Adventures & Painefull Peregrinations of long Nineteene Yeares Travayles from Scotland to the most famous Kingdomes in Europe, Asia and Affrica* (1632; Glasgow: James MacLehose and Sons, 1906).

such, or Portuguese *as such*—national types rather than individual heroes. This focus on national character was made explicit in the first major English sea-voyage collection, Richard Hakluyt's *Principall Navigations Voiages and Discoveries of the English Nation* (1589-1600). His collection presented individual voyages as collective acts of the "English Nation" and was offered explicitly as an instrument of empire. Similarly, before the Hakluyts, there was Giovanni Ramusio, who in Venice in 1550 published the *Primo Volume delle Navigationi et Viaggi, nel qual si Descrittione del Africa e del paese del Prete Ianni, con Varii Viaggi del Mar Rosso a Calicut*. Following Hakluyt and Ramusio, the Portuguese Bernardo Gomes de Brito published his *Historia tragico-maritima em que se escrevem cronologicamente os naufragios qui tiverao as naos de Portugal, depois que se poz exercicio a navegacao da India* (1735)—a collection of sea-disaster narratives collected from popular pamphlets.

In many ways, Janeway used his anthology, the first English narrative collection devoted solely to sea-wonder narratives, to portray a collective and transnational identity for *Protestants*, rather than for the English nation. Although Janeway was not himself a colonist, his work significantly influenced colonists like Increase Mather, who cited him extensively and copied numerous narratives from him. Janeway's influence suggests the degree to which New Englanders' representations of their group identity utilized a broader and internationally Protestant, rather than narrowly English or even New England, rhetoric. Examples of this rhetoric, besides those provided by Janeway, emerge from Protestant sea-faring nations all over Europe.

To understand the uniqueness of Mather's approach, it is worth considering its parent text.[75] When James Janeway published his 1674 collection—*Mr. James Janeway's Legacy to his Friends, Containing Twenty Seven Famous Instances of Gods Providences in and about Sea Dangers and Deliverances*—it was not a brand new beast. Others had already published anthologies of travels featuring numerous "sea dangers and deliverances." However, Janeway was an innovator in several respects that could speak particularly to the colonial situation of New England, not just to a general audience. Most importantly, he presented his text as a collection of "God's Providences," not as an account of the "Discoveries of the English Nation." As an author and editor, Janeway (a "minister of the gospel" as his title pages announced) was primarily a collector of wondrous providence tales—stories meant to illustrate not just an adventure, but God's hand at work in human lives, thereby encouraging faith and piety. Travel literature with an imperialist bent, therefore, was not his primary interest or specialty.[76] As piety stories rather than tales of heroic Englishmen, Janeway's chronicles always featured God as the

[75] Mather specifically cites Janeway as at least having mentioned, and perhaps providing his primary source for, the Gibbons, Woodbery, Hungare, and Clark episodes he recounts—4 of the 10 total narratives in his collection.

[76] In the twenty-first century, Janeway may best be known as the man who exhorted parents that "your child is never too young to go to hell." A popular author, he was (and remains) best known for his collection of children's tales—*A Token for Children: being an exact account of the conversion, holy and exemplary lives and joyful deaths of several young children*—which readers can still find today on web sites such as blessedhopeministries.net. The first American edition of this text, published in 1700 with additional materials supplied by Cotton Mather, is counted as the first piece of children's literature in the American Antiquarian Society's archives of American publications. See Janeway, *A token for children.: Being an exact account of the conversion, holy and exemplary lives and joyful deaths of several young children. By James Janeway, Minister of the Gospel.: To which is added, A token, for the children of New England. Or, Some examples of children, in whom the fear of God was remarkably budding before they died; in several parts of New England. Preserved and published for the encouragement of piety in other children* (Boston, 1700).

central actor. The tales' other characters were also defined primarily according to their relationship to God, rather than their relationship to any country.

Because Janeway put God before country in this way, his collection was more broadly Protestant than narrowly national in focus, a fact which allowed it to be transnational in focus and to rely on the anthology format to portray an even broader scene than many of the era's other travel or discovery collections. Although he generally featured English protagonists, he also included New Englanders, Scottish dissenting ministers, Dutch sailors, "A Flemming named Pickman," and even one Admiral Hauteen of the Netherlands, "being sent to interrupt the Spanish Fleet . . . in the year 1606 in the Wars betwixt the Netherlands and the Spaniards, upon the Spanish Ocean."[77] All of these characters could be cast as proverbially plain Protestants (no matter their real identities or politics). The Netherlands, for example, had just waged the Eighty Years War (1568-1648) against Philip II's Catholic Spain (and by extension, against Philip's father, Charles V, Hapsburg Emperor).[78] When Janeway reports how Admiral Hauteen, who led a Dutch fleet against the Spanish in 1606 during the Eighty Years War, decided with his defeated crew to blow up the ship rather than surrender to popish Spaniards, the decision illustrates a Protestant political virtue of resisting conversion to Catholicism, and not merely Dutch national pride: "for kneeling down upon their Knees, they like dying, but desperate men, beg of God, that he would please to pardon in that they sought to shun the

[77] Janeway, *Legacy*, 37.

[78] It is true that the Dutch and English waged repeated wars against one another during the 1650s and 60s (1652-54, 1664-67, 1672-74), for control of maritime trade routes. Nevertheless, Janeway's references to the Netherlands always mention their religious position in opposition to Catholic Spain, rather than their commercial position against England. From his religious perspective, the Netherlands are an *us*, not a *them.*

Mockeries and Cruelties of the Spaniards, by that sad and lamentable death; so they set fire to the Gun-powder, by which threescore men were kill'd, two half dead, lived a little while, being taken by the Spaniards with wonder, beholding their dreadful Countenances, and their words, with their strange Resolution and Obstinacy in death."[79] The story assigns the admiral's motivation for martyrdom to his piety.

Flanders did not join the Dutch revolt against Spain or the 1579 Union of Utrecht, organized to oppose Spanish rule. Yet Janeway identifies the Flemish sailor "Pickman" as a man "well known in England and Holland, for the art he had in getting out of the Sea, the great Guns of that Spanish Fleet, that was forced upon the Coast of Ireland and Scotland, in the year 1588)." He is, therefore, someone famous for despoiling the Spanish after a wartime defeat, which makes him a participant, albeit at a second remove, in the Eighty Years War.[80] Conversely, Janeway does not mention travelers from Catholic France, nor does he record voyages of Catholic Portuguese sailors. He writes about emigrating dissenting pastors from Scotland, but mentions no emigrants from Catholic northern Ireland. As a result, Janeway defines the English not merely in contrast to some Europeans, such as the Spanish, but also in alliance with other Protestant Europeans, a decision which takes sides in the English politics of the day.

Wondrous providence factors into other identity-forming representations based on a similar calculus of religious politics, by assigning perceived enemies' good deeds to God's providence rather than to their capacity for kindness or humaneness. Frequently English or otherwise Protestant travelers are portrayed as surviving tough scrapes

[79] Janeway, *Legacy*, 39.

[80] Janeway, *Legacy*, 31.

because their cultural opponent—Irish, Spanish, African, or indigenous American—showed compassion to them. Where the travelers expect abuse, torture, or murder, instead they are fed, healed, or released. But in the logic of this kind of providence tale, the credit for such grace automatically defaults to God (and, by extension, God's faithful people), rather than to the oppositional "other." Janeway's is an anthology at pains to make God, not humans, the chief agent in each narrative, and through this means he is able to defraud non-Protestant characters of any claim to virtue. There is thus almost no sense of a Spanish / English engagement; only a God / antichrist encounter.

Although Janeway avowed essentially conservative *motives* for offering his wonder collection to the public—the final sentence of his publication exhorted readers to "O pray hard; let going to sea, being in storms at Sea; being brought to extremities at Sea; learn you then to pray"—in *effect* his book turned upside down the established rhetorical function of sea-providence narratives, a fact not lost on Increase Mather, as we will see.[81] As J. P. Conlan has argued and as seen in the Council for Virginia's response to the Bermuda shipwreck, narratives and especially anthologies featuring sea providences on the Atlantic were originally developed into their early-modern form as instruments of national empire by pro-expansionist writers in England and Europe. English writers, in particular, celebrated a national character portrayed by heroic English explorers on the high seas whose valor and courage could be compared profitably to the apparently venial and cowardly activities of the Spanish or Portuguese. At the same time, the texts promoted the cause of English colonization and exploration in the Americas to a public

[81] Janeway, *Legacy*, 134.

often skeptical of such ventures, thereby using sea providences to confirm God's approval for these endeavors.

Janeway's anthology reversed the logic of both of these arguments. On the first count, his inclusive anthology undercut exceptionalist arguments about national character. The Englishmen abandoned by their captain in frozen Newfoundland, for example, showed remarkable courage and fortitude, but so did the Dutch admiral and the Flemish captain. The rhetorical maneuver by which the Richard Hakluyts and Samuel Purchas had portrayed men like Drake or Frobisher as peculiarly heroic and valorous was here revealed to be wholly unoriginal, common in stories from an entire group of European countries. The reader of Janeway's collection was encouraged to conclude that admirable qualities adhered to the characters' religious commitments, not to their nascent nationalities.

At the same time, Janeway's book inverted the function of sea providences in political arguments of the day. Rather than using sea providences as evidence to support arguments for English colonization and expansion, Janeway's collection presented expansion-related wonders as evidence to support arguments for Protestantism—here figured as the most authoritative form of religion and as the most important political commitment of a nation-state. According to this barely noticeable but fundamental shift in orientation, a country's character should be celebrated only to the extent that its inhabitants were good Protestants, and even more importantly, that they *behaved* as good Protestants in key public arenas, such as the international contests on the seas and in the new world. Within this framing, the burden of proof radically shifted for any group

attempting to establish an authoritative public identity for itself. Rather than showing, as Strachey had sought so desperately to do, that a given colony's governmental and social practices closely matched those of the national metropolis, a colony needed instead to establish its authenticity as a committed Protestant community first and foremost. It then earned the right to represent its country in the international contact zone of the Atlantic and, in fact, could argue that it served as a better representative than groups in the homeland (such as, for instance, the Council for Virginia). For New Englanders watching their own metropolis drift farther and farther away from serious Protestant church-state reform, this new burden of proof enabled them to promote as a positive good their *differences* from the metropolis. Without drawing attention to their radical governmental or social practices, the example of Janeway's sea-providence narratives enabled them to highlight essential aspects of their colonial situation that prompted or brought to light a deeper commitment to the Protestant religion than the church-state form being forged in Canterbury and London. Consequently, they could situate themselves as truer representatives of England than those living in England itself.

James Janeway, needless to say, was not able entirely to rewrite the standards by which New England colonists would be judged in English court circles and Parliament. But as an immensely popular writer, he commanded significant influence over a broader reading public, especially those who cared about the relation between religion and public affairs, or those who cared about what was going on in the Atlantic and Americas. Both audiences mattered to New England leaders seeking to establish their colony's public reputation and political autonomy in a time of growing threats—the 1670s and 1680s.

Anthologizing New England

Janeway's relevance for colonial New England spoke clearly enough to Increase Mather, who not only borrowed key features of Janeway's anthology in his *Essay* but cited him extensively, taking several of his own New England stories from Janeway's collection and clearly advising his readers of this borrowing. Mather repeatedly cites his debt to Janeway ("Memorable also is that which Mr. *Janeway* in his Remarkable Sea-Deliverances, *P. 35.* hath published"; "That Worthy and now blessed Minister of God Mr. *James Janeway,* hath published several other Remarkable Sea-Deliverances; of which some belonging to *New-England* were the Subjects. He relates . . ."; and "These things have (as was said) been related by Mr. *Janeway*").[82] Mather, however, does not hesitate to modify Janeway's method to pursue his own ends. He immediately narrowed the scope of his own collection in order to focus it on a specific region. "Many remarkable Stories of this kind [i.e. sea providences], are to be seen in Books already published," he admits. "*E.G.* in *Mandelslo's* Travels, *Hackluit*, and *Linshoten's* Voyages; *Wanleyl's* History; *Causin's* Holy Court; Mr. *Burton's* Treatises lately printed, and in Mr. *Janeway's* Sea-Deliverances." However, he insists, "I shall in this Chapter confine my self unto things which have hapned either in *New-England,* or wherein *N-England* Vessels have been concerned."[83] The first chapter of Mather's wonder collection, taking up the theme of wondrous providence for his own purposes, thus collects sea-providence

[82] Mather, *Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences*, 17, 19, 20.

[83] Mather, *Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences,* 2.

anecdotes into an inductive representation of New England's people and activities—projecting a public identity for an imagined community.[84] Although Mather's focus on New England departs from Janeway's broad transnational scope, his representation relies on Janeway's logic while applying it to a more specific political goal: the authentication of New England as a truly new and improved England.

Mather's regional focus, however, should not be confused with earlier writers' *national* focus. As a society of migrants and migrants' children who, for most of the colony's life, had identified themselves as English, Mather cannot draw upon an established identity for *New Englanders* to define the subjects uniting his chapter's narratives: unlike Hakluyt's *"English nation"* or Ramusio's *"Portuguese,"* in 1684 the colonists in Massachusetts, Connecticut, Plymouth, Rhode Island, and the inland frontiers had not yet forged even a fictionally unified and stable public identity. Mather's anthology must therefore rely on a vague and imaginary concept for its thematic focus. "New England"—an ambitious name dreamt up by John Smith in 1616 for the then-

[84] The stories are most easily identified by their primary named protagonist, usually the ship's master but sometimes, as in Thacher's case, one of its sole survivors. These individuals and their stories appear in the following order in Mather's collection: 1) Anthony Thacher, sole survivor with his wife of a 1635 wreck en route from Ipswich to Marblehead; 2) "that gallant Commander Major *Edward Gibbons*" who was "going from *Boston* to some other parts of *America*" when becalmed at sea; 3) Thomas Woodbery, master of a ketch "sailing from *New-England* for *Barbados*," who saved 11 men found starving in a long boat; 4) Philip Hungare, master of a "small Vessel" which "coming upon the Coast of *New-England*, suddenly sprang a Leak, and so Foundered;" 5) Jonas Clark, "of *New-England* going for *Virginia*," and whose vessel was "cast ashoar in the night;" 6) John Grafton, who was "bound in a Voyage from *Salem* in *New-England,* for the *West-Indies*, in a Ketch called the *Providence*," which struck a rock and broke to pieces in the night; 7) William Dutton, who had "set Sail from *Bristol* to *New-England*, Sept. 22. 1681" but ran out of provisions before reaching America; 8) Andrew Bennet, master of a ship from Dublin headed to Virginia, whose ship sank in the Atlantic and left 7 to survive in a boat; 9) Thomas Welden, sailing from St. Christophers to London, whose ship was disabled at sea and eventually rescued by a French ship heading to Newfoundland and thence to Boston; 10) William Laiton, whose ship, "bound from *Pascataqua* in New-*England* to *Barbadoes,*" sprang a leak (Mather, *Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences,* 15, 17, 19, 20, 23, 26, 30).

unsettled regions north of the Chesapeake—was legally instantiated in separately chartered units as the Massachusetts Bay Colony, Connecticut Colony, New Haven Colony (until it was absorbed by Connecticut), Rhode Island Colony, and Plymouth Colony, each engaged in various contentious struggles with the others over boundaries and Indian relations. Within the individual colonies, even, legal boundaries were not fixed and communities were sometimes so far flung that members of frontier or northern fishing towns had almost no contact with the major colonial centers like Boston (as Thacher's narrative indicates). Moreover, the individual colonial units expressed sometimes rancorous disagreements with one another and organized themselves according to differing social and legal codes. Although the colonies had formed a pan-colony alliance, the "United Colonies of New England," it had served primarily as a site for negotiating the competing interests of the still-quite-separate individual colonies.[85]

Further, as the narratives themselves make manifestly clear, significant portions of the "New England" population were transitory. By the 1680s, Boston had established itself as a major port and shipbuilding center in Atlantic trade circuits, with boats coming through from Newfoundland, on their way to the West Indies or Guinea, or going back to England, Ireland, or Europe. Others made their living trading within the colonies but between different regions. [86] In one story, for example, "a small Vessel (the Masters Name Philip Hungare)" merely "*coming upon* the Coast of New-England" from England

[85] See Harry M. Ward, *The United Colonies of New England—1643-90* (New York: Vantage Press, 1961).

[86] April Lee Hatfield thoroughly discusses the various trade, migration, and travel networks in which American colonists participated during the seventeenth century. Although she focuses her study on Virginia, she necessarily discusses New England and other English colonies in the Atlantic. See her *Atlantic Virginia*. For a discussion of New England traders, see Bernard Bailyn's still-relevant *New England Merchants in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955).

"suddenly sprang a Leak, and so Foundered." After surviving for five weeks on flying fish and the blood sucked from the belly of a shark, "the divine providence brought [the vessel] to the *West-Indies*." Likewise, a subsequent story about "Mr. John Grafton and some others of his Ships Company . . . bound in a Voyage from Salem in New England, for the West-Indies, in a Ketch called the Providence," features travelers coming from one place, Salem, headed for another, the West Indies, whose relation to either is tenuous. The chapter's first story—Anthony Thacher's—not only involves travelers but new immigrants who have been "of New England," (Mather's term) for a mere matter of weeks before the events of the story take place. In fact, for many of the people in these stories, this state of displacement is not temporary. They are travelers by trade—sailors, pirates, businessmen—always on the move between New England's world and traditional known spaces.[87] Nevertheless, Mather's sea providence chapter uses the term "New England" repeatedly and insistently to identify not just a physical place, but a social group.

From a twenty-first-century perspective, it is easy to view as simply natural Mather's notion of "New England" as a unifying theme for his collection. And yet even a present-day literary scholar like Andrew Delbanco recently had to argue for his decision to compile a literary anthology called *Writing New England* comprised entirely of texts designated, circularly, as expressions of a "New England mind."[88] While earlier

[87] Mather, *Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences,* 19 (emphasis mine), 20, 3-4.

[88] Like Mather, Delbanco also sought to define a common thread for his anthology. Unlike Mather, however, Delbanco employed a selection criterion of mentalité rather than geography. His writers had to exhibit the "New England mind," a worldview evidenced primarily by its exercise of conscience: "With the ever-present possibility of its shading into self-love on the one hand or self-hatred on the other, this moral scrupulosity—whether we prefer to call it New England nature or New England conscience—is the

generations of colonial historians felt comfortable grouping the diverse peoples and widespread physical settlements of New England into one coherent "New England mind," the last 25 years of colonial historiography have seen such a monolithic fiction dissolve under pressures to recognize the particularities of this complex and diverse region. And yet, I would argue, earlier scholars' inclination to see a unified "New England" itself testifies to the persuasiveness of texts like Mather's *Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences.* It is the burden of Mather's collection to *create* that fictional notion and to flesh it out with real characters acting in vivid physical settings framed in a plot whose endings frequently lead characters back to the regional community with a sense of coherent social closure.

This construction of social coherence appears most visibly in the stories' common endings: a joyous home-coming to New England. Although Mather does not repeat the word "home," his endings consistently portray New England as the "safe . . . shoar." His travelers are "brought safe unto the *English Plantations"* or "brought . . . safe to *New-England*."[89] Insistently declaring "New England" as a home space—a safe shore, a place of refreshment, the shelter from the storm—would have been, at that time, a relatively new and unusual sort of claim, even in the northern colonies that had always intended to erect permanent settlements with lifelong residents. To declare "New England" home conveyed a strong positive evaluation of American society, a declaration that it could

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fundamental legacy of Puritanism to New England and, more generally, to America." Like Mather's attempt to define New England, Delbanco's argument is circular, a fact generally obscured by an editor's seeming absence from his or her anthology's implicit argument. See Andrew Delbanco, ed., *Writing New England: An Anthology from the Puritans to the Present* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001), xxvi.

[89] Mather, *Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences*, 17, 20, 28.

provide a socially and spiritually valid life, one not essentially inferior to that provided by the metropolis, one that provided all the necessary ingredients for a complete life.

The stories themselves can only suggest what such a home coming means. Coming home safe to New England consists of the travelers' physical return to the anchored social space of New England and their spiritual transformation into individuals prepared to take their place in New England's reformed church. The latter quality is demonstrated neatly in the conclusion to Thomas Walden's story about travelers voyaging towards London whose ship had become disabled at sea. The group is rescued by a French vessel and then deposited in New England, where they "did . . . arrive *June* 21. 1683. declaring how they had seen the wonders of God in the deep, as hath been expressed." New England is where one winds up once one has seen God. The former quality, demonstrating New England as a unified community, organizes the story of William Laiton, master of a ship sunk off the New England coast. He and his stranded crew are rescued by one Commander Scarlet, a New Englander, whose ship was also "destitute of Provision; only they had on board Water enough and to spare." Scarlet must decide whether to preserve the remainder of his provisions for his own ship, or risk all by helping Laiton's crew. He demonstrates his commitment to community when he refuses his crew's pleas to turn away from the stranded men:

> Captain *Scarlet,* who as after he left using the Sea, he gave many demonstrations both living and dying of his designing the good of others, and not his own particular Advantage only, did at this time manifest the same Spirit to be in him; and therefore would by no means hearken to the

> selfish suggestions of his Men, but replied to them, (as yet not knowing who they were) It may be these distressed Creatures are our own Countrey-men, or if not, they are Men in misery, and therefore what eer come of it, I am resolved to take them in, and to trust in God who is able to deliver us all.

God did not let him down. All the men were providentially provided for and returned "safe in *New England.*"[90] In all cases, the experiences of New England colonists are wonders—acts of special providence—exercised through America's wild nature and thus evidence of God's active hand in building a new England in America. In each case, moreover, "home" is the promised land to which weary travelers are delivered after having survived their 40 years in the wilderness. The sea and its implacably a-social, faceless, inhuman qualities here takes on the role of the "wilderness," while the American wilderness itself—the shore and land—become the American equivalent of Canaan. It is there the travelers find balm for their wounds, rest and food, companionship and spiritual succor.

For Mather, the figure of the "safe shoar" also unites the disparate generations of New England colonists into one ageless whole. The difference between the 1637 Edward Gibbons of John Winthrop and the 1684 Edward Gibbons of Increase Mather is here elided. Anthony Thacher's 1635 experience gets included alongside, and is presented as being continuous with, William Dutton's experience of 1681. Dates are mentioned briefly, but Mather does not organize the materials to encourage observation of any

[90] Mather, *Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences*, 29, 31.

diachronic change. The imaginary space of New England as "home" is timeless and unchanging; all are one. "New England" is thus figured as a truly new, revived, awakened England, one free from the social, political, and religious dissensions boiling in Europe and creating Strachey's "shipwrack on the Continent of Virginia."[91]

In Mather's narratives, this imaginary space and community take shape in the vividly real physical space of American marine nature. For many in England and Europe, the colonies' chief fault lay in their location on the wild and intemperate American continent. Mather thus needs to connect his imaginary to the frighteningly real, and so "home-coming" has also to transform American nature from "wilderness" to "safe shoar." Shipwreck narratives always feature violent and foreign nature, nearly killing the protagonists. In wonder versions, however, at some point in the narrative God intervenes not *in spite of* nature, but *through* nature. Nature, yet untamed, shows itself to be God's instrument. Flying fish and docile birds often throw themselves into becalmed ships as the land and sea spontaneously provide food for the desperate travelers, as they had for Gibbons' crew. Thacher finds firm ground to stand on in the chaotic waters. God relieves Philip Hungare and crew by "causing some flying Fish to fall into the Boat." William Strachey and the travelers aboard the *Sea Venture* find themselves delivered out of the Atlantic waters into Bermuda, not an "isle of devils" but a tropical paradise, Strachey's "fortunate Isle." Mather reports that Ephraim How, much like Robinson Crusoe, found himself able to live on a desolate island for many months. Janeway reports how a group of men on a fishing voyage abandoned in Greenland by their captain made a home for

[91] It is thus advanced rhetorically as a truly "imagined community" rather than the "social imaginary" Carla Mulford offers in correction of Anderson.

themselves in the wilderness through the icy winter—a testament to their strong community ethic, but also to their ability to live with and through, instead of against, the western wilderness. Perhaps most tellingly, by 1722, the young and pious New Englander Philip Ashton was willing to choose life on a deserted island rather than continue in the captivity of unethical pirates.[92]

The sea never sheds its aura of danger and the shore retains its cold freezes and wild animals, yet shipwreck narratives almost always conclude with the cooperation of the colonists and nature in a new relationship mediated by God. American nature thus changes itself from a violent wilderness foe to a home space guided by divine agency, and the new Americans who find homes there do so as individuals who have learned to listen to God's providence in new ways. Thus Mather combines the natural space featured in individual stories with the anthologies' imaginary social space. This reconciliation of the colonists to their American space, their finding God in places where they had only looked for danger, recurs throughout sea deliverance narratives. The motif could in fact be read as the genre's only story: a violent encounter with American nature resolving itself into new spiritual life for individuals freed from more traditional political and social strictures.

From this perspective, Mather—a leader of New England's second generation—uses these tales to make essentially the same claim as Janeway: that the colonists' sea

[92] Philip Ashton, *Ashton's Memorial: An History of the Strange Adventures, and Signal Deliverances, of Mr. Philip Ashton, Who, After He Had Made His Escape from the Pirates, Liv'd Alone on a Desolate Island for About Sixteen Months, &c.: With a Short Account of Mr. Nicholas Merritt, Who Was Taken at the Same Time: To Which is Added a Sermon on Dan. 3. 17.*, transcribed, edited, and compiled by John Barnard (Boston, 1725).

providences evidence their religious nature, stressing direct experience of the divine and reading the book of nature in ways not available to older, degenerate societies, which makes the American colonists appear to be England's best representatives in the international contact zone of the Atlantic. These stories reflect a focus on transformation, showing readers how new experiences can enable them to become truly reformed as a community and as individuals, rather than attempting to establish the colonists' similarity to the metropolitan society. In Mather's handling, this transformation involves a new, more symbiotic relationship to an Atlantic and American natural space that is no longer "foreign," and so must be redefined as a central part of the colonial mission.

American Pilgrimage, American Fact

It might be argued that, although popular and capable of commanding a widespread readership, sea-voyage narratives did not hold the cultural cachet necessary to significantly reconfigure New England's public identity. Yet of all the wonder genres to be considered in this dissertation, sea-providence narratives almost certainly carried the most cultural weight. Increase Mather did not have to rely solely on the cultural value assigned to earlier sea-voyage narratives such as those collected by Hakluyt and Purchas, or conversely, to the popular appeal of James Janeway. The trope of difficult, trying journeys leading to an eventual and joyous home-coming was, of course, the fundamental story of the people of Israel. In their travels from hostile homelands to often unwelcoming new lands, early Protestants' dangerous voyages became re-enactments of the wanderings of the people of Israel. The Israelites' protracted wandering, in turn, had

become the basis for an extensive Christian metaphoric language describing the experience of faith as a long and winding journey, as in John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, one of the period's most popular books and one of the first English books pirated in significant quantities in the American colonies (London, 1678; Boston, 1681).[93] Literary scholar Cecilia Tichi has shown that by mid-century, the sea voyage had become the spiritual metaphor of choice for New England historians, one that enabled historians to characterize the lives of colonists and the whole colony as a spiritual pilgrimage. "The wayfaring motif of spiritual biography," she argues, "pervades [the period's] histories, not only in the literal sense of Atlantic crossings enumerated but in a widely metaphorical one. Between the historians' careful telling of ships remarkably delivered from peril and their imaginative extension to New England itself as a ship, there is a varied play on the theme of journeying." [94] For Edward Johnson, for example, life in colonial America was like "passing through an Ocean of troubles, Voyaging night and day upon the great deep," while William Hubbard demonstrated how other colonists' failures would serve as "buoys to give notice of the dangerous temptations, that like rocks which lie unseen, are found in discontented minds, on which they often shipwreck their souls forever, as well as lives." The metaphor was stretched even further, Tichi notes, when "the figure of New England itself as a ship underway" became common. Repeteadly, New England writings

[93] *The Pilgrim's Progress* first appeared in 1678 and was followed by second and third editions appearing in 1678 and 1679, respectively. In 1684, the "Second Part" was first published. Subsequent editions published both parts together. The first American imprint appeared in 1681 printed by Samuel Green "upon assignment of Samuel Sewall."

[94] Cecelia Tichi, "Spiritual Biography and the 'Lords Remembrancers,'" 75.

figure the soul's growth in faith and the colony's development as a sea voyage styled after the Israelites ongoing migrations.

Narratives of dangerous voyages also articulated an experience common to seventeenth-century Protestants all over Europe, many of whom ultimately chose to colonize or change countries in order to practice their religion under more optimal circumstances. As I have pointed out in a previous chapter, early settlers to the Chesapeake and New England were not the only European Protestants voyaging long distances across the globe. Rather, they were, part of a much larger migration pattern, a process that was so common as to almost be the norm, as German migration historian Georg Fertig argues, but which was never considered normative.[95] Historians disagree about the degree to which religion actually motivated these migrations, and yet all acknowledge that much of the period's restlessness resulted from widespread religious wars, persecutions, and in calmer areas such as England, frustrations with the institutionalized church. Nearly all of these conflicts were the products of religious differences, centered on the fundamental power struggles between Catholics and Protestants for control of churches, states, and souls. Many of these conflicts resulted in Protestants traveling to new lands.[96] Migration and especially sea voyaging were thus set

[95] See Georg Fertig, "Transatlantic Migration from the German-Speaking Parts of Central Europe, 1600-1800: Proportions, Structures, and Explanations" in *Europeans on the Move: Studies on European Migration, 1580-1800,* ed. Nicholas Canny (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 22.

[96] See Nicholas Canny, "English Migration into and across the Atlantic during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," in *Europeans on the Move: Studies on European Migration, 1500-1800*, ed. Nicholas Canny (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 39-75. Historians like David Cressy have argued that economic rather than spiritual motives were the prime, or even the sole, factor motivating settlement in particular communities within New England. Canny holds a more moderate position: "Historians of recent vintage have tended to downgrade religion as a factor influencing English overseas migration during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This tendency has developed partly in reaction to the generalizations

forth as apt metaphors for describing the state of being a Christian in this environment of ongoing reformation.

Finally, some sea-providence narratives made use, to a limited extent, of an additional interpretive framework developing over the course of the seventeenth century. Mather's collection of sea deliverance narratives displayed the influence of the new science of faith and empiricism emerging on the continent and in England. While I discuss in the next chapter the more blatantly scientific wonder writings of Mather and other early American philosophers, it is worthwhile to note how even the sea deliverance narratives, modeled so clearly on Protestant and Old Testament narrative forms, drew on emerging notions of reading nature as providing scientific "evidence." To the extent that the events they recorded were wondrous—events demonstrating natural phenomena above and beyond that observed in the normal course of affairs—the narratives offered a kind of "evidence" which, according to historians of science, held for a brief period of time the highest status among natural philosophers.

Sea deliverances thus occupied a shady ground between a kind of miracle—God's direct intervention into nature in order to effect His will—and the marvelous or preternatural, a category in which unaided nature or created spirits (such as angels and demons) intervened to produce effects that are (in Aquinas's words) "not everywhere in

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advanced by an earlier generation of historians on the basis of a defective understanding of the seventeenth-century migration to New England, and partly out of a belief that religious persecution in England was never at a level that would justify a comparison with the experiences of Huguenots in seventeenth-century France or Jews in nineteenth-century Russia. However, religious considerations can be seen to have exerted at least some influence on English migratory trends, whether these are considered at the macro-level or at the micro-level." See David Cressy, *Coming Over: Migration and Communication between England and New England in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987), 74.

keeping with what always occurs." [97] A key moment in the development of the new natural philosophy, according to historians of science, came when Francis Bacon argued that natural philosophers ought to pay attention to such irregular objects or singular events —exceptions to Aristotle's rules that offered privileged insights into the hidden workings of nature—a turn which would have situated sea wonder narratives in the realm of the natural, as well.[98]

For a time, then, argues historian Lorraine Daston, highly unusual phenomena (such as the events in some sea wonder narratives) carried the authority of scientific natural fact *as well as* the authority of preternatural or supernatural providence. While the simultaneous authority of these multiple interpretive frameworks would not last into the eighteenth century, it held for the latter half of the seventeenth. Sea deliverances carried a dimension of pure miracle which was long considered the purest form of proof, as seen in the earliest sea voyaging narratives discussed in this chapter. They also held peculiar status as preternatural phenomena—events naturally mediated but reflecting divine will. And they held, for a time, status as the most valuable kind of natural philosophical evidence – the Baconian fact, worth attending simply because it might reveal a phenomenon ignored by Aristotle and the scholastics. I have argued here that Mather, at least, was aware of his narratives' ability to attract and influence all three kinds of readers, even if present day readers have been less able to see the meaning or value of such narratives. As we move into scientific wonder writings in the next chapter, I will pursue Mather's and others' cultural manipulations of these traditional Protestant

[97] Daston, "Marvelous Facts and Miraculous Evidence," 97.

[98] Daston, "Marvelous Facts and Miraculous Evidence," 111.

rhetorics in order to trace the production of a "natural identity" for New England, one figured as a spiritual identity of a community of believers in a kind of violent communion with America.

Chapter 4: "Curiosa Americana": Reading Wondrous Natural Facts at the Edge of the World

> For Turky . . . enquire whether the Relations of a whole City's being turned into Stone be true . . . For Egypt . . . enquire whether the Appearance of Legs and Arms of Men, related to stand out of the Ground, to a great Number, at five Miles from *Cairo*, on *Good Friday*, do still continue, and how that Imposture is perform'd. . . For Suratte, & c. . . . [enquire] whether it be true that Diamonds and other Precious Stones, do grow again after three Years, in the same Places where they have been digged out. . . . For Virginia and Bermudas . . . [enquire] whether at the Bottom of the Bay of Cheasapeak, northward, the Natives be still of such a Gigantick Stature, as has been reported; and whether there be another not far from these, Easterly, of a Dwarfish Stature. . . . For Guaiana and Brasil . . [enquire] whether about *Orabba,* near *Oronoque* . . . toads are presently produced, by throwing a kind of Morish Water . . . upon the Floors of their Houses.
>
> —Robert Boyle, *General Heads for the Natural History of a Country*, *Great or Small, Drawn Out for the Use of Travellers and Navigators*, 1692

> It would seem a strange hyperbole to report of a country, where the swine are so tall, that they eat acornes upon the tops of the standing growing oaks, but it will appeare, not to be a riddle.
>
> —John Winthrop, Jr., letter to Henry Oldenburg, Secretary of the Royal Society, 1669

> I shall no longer defer my Story of a Gentleman at our Newbury, who has lately vomited a Lizard. [sic]
>
> —Cotton Mather, "Curiosa Americana" letter to John Woodward and James Jurin, Fellows of the Royal Society, 1724

Matters of Fact: Writing America's "Curious" Histories

If travel literatures, particularly writings about sea travels to the exotic edges of the known world, mark the origins from which wonder writings emerged, early modern "science" charted the directions they went in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

A deep and voracious curiosity about unusual, marvelous, wondrous other worlds had compelled Marco Polo towards Cathay and Sir Walter Raleigh through Guiana. Hispaniola and its wonders, so like the fables of Ophir and Cathay, had driven Columbus's wonderment with America and had prompted the Spanish crown's contributions to his missions. Curiosity about exotic distant lands such as Iceland or Virginia combined with a well-established popular curiosity in spiritually marvelous phenomena (such as the hand of a possessed French nun inscribed with writing by demons[1]), and the combination created a broad market hungry for the pleasures of viewing or reading about "curious" events or objects. This market would establish the profitability of wonder literature, including the purely imaginary (or plagiarized) travel accounts of Mandeville and Andre Thevet.[2] Yet the exotic unknown exerted an equally powerful draw on natural philosophers—those who would later come to be called "scientists"—devoted to acquiring a fuller knowledge of the world.

It is thus not entirely surprising that in the 1600s, curiosity for the strange and wondrous formulated itself into "curiosa" printed in the emergent philosophical journals

[1] See Michel de Certeau, *The Possession at Loudun*, 213-228.

[2] See, in particular, Mary Baine Campbell's provocative discussion of Andre Thevet in *Wonder & Science: Imagining Worlds in Early Modern Europe*, 25-67, and her discussion of *Mandeville's Travels* in *The Witness and the Other World*, 165-209.

of London's new-found Royal Society, the French *Academie Royale des Sciences,* and in the German *Academia Naturae Curiosorum.* Contributors to these publications often referred to themselves and their imagined readers as "the curious" and their objects of study as "curiosities" or, in Latinate form, "curiosa." Referring to his collection of the Royal Society's first 40 years of *Philosophical Transactions,* for example, editor John Lowthorp characterized all of the journal's reports as "curious papers" compiled into "curious volumes,"[3] labels that united the journal's articles by their shared interest in the unfamiliar rather than their shared use of an emergent scientific methodology.[4]

The "curious" (who did not yet think of themselves as "scientists") wanted to know about all kinds of strange and wonder-full things. We gain some sense of the breadth of their writings by surveying Lowthrop's collection. This three-volume publication included an exotically plentiful array of curious material for its readers to savor: from Geometry and Arithmetick to Opticks and Acousticks; and from Navigation, Architecture, and Ship Building to Musick, Physiology, Meteorology, and Monsters. To be sure, much of this expansive list of topics does not sound so curious to the modern ear; many fit what we now think of as the sciences. A closer look, however, begins to make

[3] John Lowthorp, ed., preface to *The Philosophical Transactions and Collections, to the End of the Year 1700. Abridg'd and Dispos'd under General Heads*, vol. 1 (London, 1705).

[4] "Curiosity" as a social and intellectual phenomenon, philosophical "curiosa," and cabinets of curiosity, have received a surge of recent scholarly interest. For major recent examples, see the recent special issue of the online journal *Common-place.org*, "Cabinets of Curiosities" [*Common-Place.org* 4 (2004)]; Barbara M. Benedict's tantalizing but vague monograph, *Curiosity: A Cultural History of Early Modern Inquiry* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001); and Justin Stagl's history of social research, *A History of Curiosity: The Theory of Travel, 1550-1800* (Chur, Switzerland: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1995). Other major studies include Paula Findlen, *Possessing Nature: Museums, Collecting, and Scientific Culture in Early Modern Italy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); Krzystof Pomian, *Collectors and Curiosities: Paris and Venice, 1500-1800* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990); and Oliver Impey and Arthur MacGregor, eds., *The Origins of Museums: The Cabinet of Curiosities in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Europe* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985).

these familiar topics appear strange again. Under the subject of "meteorology," for example, appeared titles such as "A Shower of Fishes, In Kent" and "Red Snow near Genoa." The study of "Hydrology" included "Petrifying Waters in *Scotland*," and "Minerology" encompassed ""Horns of American Deer, found under Ground, in Ireland." Zoology required information on "Swarms of Strange and Mischievous Insects in New England," alongside a slew of reports on monsters, including information on a "Monstrous Double Turkey," a "Monstrous Colt," a "Monstrous Calf," a "Monstrous Calf with Two Heads," "Two Monstrous Lambs," a "Monstrous Pig," "The Anatomy of a Monstrous Double-Cat," and even "An Animal resembling a Whelp, Voided per Annum, by a Male-Greyhound."

Indeed, throughout the *Transactions*, investigators find themselves repeatedly drawn to the monstrous, the weird, and the unexplainable; they focus about half the time on freak cases such as "A Girl in Ireland with Horny Excrescencies." The article titles from the early years of this prestigious journal often sound like lines from today's grocery store tabloids: "A Child 26 Years in the Mother's Belly, out of the Uterus;" "Animals Vomited by a Child;" "A Monstrous Birth, like a Monkey, at Paris;" and "An Hermaphrodite at London." Marking out the weird, wondrous, and even preternatural as important phenomena for intellectual discoveries, the journal's articles repeatedly focus on what seemed then abnormal, rather than on the regular processes of nature.

Given this interest in the strange, it is not surprising that early Royal Society members sought with particular zeal to gather extensive reports from those who had voyaged to the mysterious edges of the world. The "curious" placed a premium on

travelers' narratives about natural phenomena in faraway lands, especially possessions in the Atlantic.[5] Beginning in the early 1660s, Royal Society members aggressively sought reports from colonial New Englanders about conditions in America, and they got what they asked for. These reports took shape not as modern "science" but as early modern "natural history," a kind of reportage governed by rhetorical conventions that would become the hallmark of credibility and truth, as opposed to the modes of romance, superstition, or scholastic reasoning.

To address this influential and often astonishing body of texts, this chapter considers seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century natural history and natural philosophy writings produced *within* the American colonies—colonial texts that paid particular attention to wondrous natural phenomena in the American air, soil, flora, fauna, sea, and especially in the bodies of American settlers themselves. America's wondrous natural histories, like the sea wonder texts discussed previously, were produced by an extensive network of observers, writers, editors, and publishers spanning from common fishermen to the highest echelons of colonial and even metropolitan political and intellectual circles, and they employed emergent "discourses of fact," in Barbara J. Shapiro's words,[6] which were fast becoming the period's most authoritative means for representing a place, object, event, or group of people. Peering through the fragmented lenses of these unusual writings, we can discover how colonial intellectuals portrayed the American colonies and their inhabitants as exceptional and thus socially and religiously

[5] On the role of travelers' reports in early English natural philosophy, see Daniel Carey, "Compiling Nature's History: Travellers and Travel Narratives in the Early Royal Society," *Annals of Science* 54 (1997): 269-92.

[6] Shapiro, *A Culture of Fact: England.*

significant. Much more than the fanciful products of backward minds (as they have often been tagged), these writings were fused with influential philosophical *forms* for the purpose of pursuing a political *function.*

I begin with a case study that introduces this chapter's theses. By tracing the career of a single story—the tale of Mary Dyer's monster baby—from its emergence in a 1637 birthing room to its eventual appearance in a 1713 Latin treatise sent to the Royal Society, we are able to watch an early American narrative move from oral discourse into the intellectual and imperial politics of seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century colonial-metropolitan relations. The next two sections of this chapter break this process down into two components for closer analysis. The first maps the extensive "fact"-collection networks operant in seventeenth-century New England for the invention, reporting, and publication of stories about American wondrous phenomena (such as monster babies). The overlap between political, religious, and philosophical networks for observing strange "facts" has heretofore gone unnoticed, but it accounts for the ubiquity and development of these colonial writings. More to the point, these overlapping discursive arenas account for the multivalent functions such reports were able to serve. A final section analyzes three specific cases of "fact" collections (drawn from both print and archival sources) that emerged from this network beginning with the correspondence of the colonies' first major natural historian, John Winthrop, Jr. His correspondence with the Royal Society not only won him the distinction of becoming America's first "Fellow of the Royal Society," but his letters also appeared in the *Philosophical Transactions* as important reports on the American natural scene. A second case—Increase Mather's 1684

Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences—first merged the *religious* providence collection initiative with *natural-philosophical* rhetoric, creating a "historical" representation of the colonies that yet argued for the colonists' valuable social identity. The third case in this section considers Cotton Mather's "Curiosa Americana" letters to the Royal Society, which were also abstracted in the *Philosophical Transactions* but have never been published in full. Written during a period when numerous forces were bringing the colonies into closer conformity with metropolitan English culture, Mather's letters, I argue, emphasize what is different, especially what is exceptional, about America and the American colonies.

These cases show the emergence of a sophisticated rhetoric characterizing America as an important, wonder-filled site for new natural knowledge. None of the writers examined in this chapter became forceful authorities within English philosophical circles, though all achieved a significant degree of cultural authority and respect for their philosophical efforts. Through their use of the new natural history and their treatment of American marvels, however, their representations of the American colonies did achieve *textual* authority, setting the tone for what would eventually become a dominant tenor in characterizations of Americans and American nature.

To date, these unusual texts have been almost completely passed over by scholars. While historians and literary scholars have long studied the beginnings of modern science, they generally have not examined reports of strange insects, red snow, 26-year-old babies, or monsters. Such writings do not easily fit into the famous narrative of the apple knocking Newton on the head and westerners' subsequent emergence out of

religion's darkness into a bright "Enlightenment." Yet over the past 15 years, this myth of the "scientific revolution" has suffered repeated challenges. Historians of science have shown that change did not proceed so cleanly and that the metaphor of "revolution" confuses more than it reveals about the complicated machinations of seventeenth century intellectual, popular, and print cultures.[7] The first wave of revisionist historians noted the shared ground between the period's philosophical, religious, and magical worldviews. They rediscovered the alchemical interests of Isaac Newton,[8] the religious motivations of Robert Boyle's philosophical work,[9] the connections between demonology and the concept of empirical evidence,[10] and the central role of religion, not science, in the "decline of magic" in an increasingly Protestant Europe.[11] More recently, cultural historians and literary scholars have recognized how "discourses of fact" in natural historiography, natural philosophy writings, news reports, ballads, theology, broadsides,

[7] What kind of "revolution" is it, Betty Jo Teeter Dobbs asks, that took anywhere from 144 to 500 years, depending upon the historian you ask? She argues that we should let go a metaphor that "obscures so much continuity in the midst of change and produces such improbable interpretations of historical actors." See Betty Jo Teeter Dobbs, "Newton as Final Cause and First Mover," in *Rethinking the Scientific Revolution,* ed. Margaret J. Osler (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 2000): 31-33. For an extended critique of the "revolution" metaphor and a reimagination of early modern natural philosophy, see Margaret J. Osler, "The Canonical Imperative: Rethinking the Scientific Revolution," in *Rethinking the Scientific Revolution*, as well as the other essays in that collection. See also Ann Blair and Anthony Grafton, "Reassessing Humanism and Science," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 53 (1992): 535-40, as well as the subsequent essays in the special issue they edited of the same title.

[8] B. J. T. Dobbs, *The Foundation of Newton's Alchemy: or, "The Hunting of the Greene Lyon"* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975) and "Newton's Alchemy and his Theory of Matter," *Isis* 73 (1982): 511-28; Karin Figala, "Newton as Alchemist," *History of Science* 15 (1977): 102-37; Richard S. Westfall, "Isaac Newton's *Index chemicus,*" *Ambix* 22 (1975): 174-85; and more recently, Lawrence M. Principe, "The Alchemies of Robert Boyle and Isaac Newton: Alternate Approaches and Divergent Deployments," *Rethinking the Scientific Revolution,* 201-220.

[9] J. R. Jacob, *Robert Boyle and the English Revolution: A Study in Social and Intellectual Change* (New York: Burt Franklin & Co., Inc., 1977);

[10] Stuart Clark, "The Scientific Status of Demonology," in *Occult and Scientific Mentalities in the Renaissance*, ed. Brian Vickers (Cambridge, 1984), pp. 351-74.

[11] The two key monographs on this subject are those of Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*; and Peter Harrison, *The Bible, Protestantism, and the Rise of Natural Science.*

wonder anthologies, travel reports, and piety books shared subject matters, discursive strategies, and publication networks—an observation that has blurred many of the boundaries between elite and popular reading publics and between "scientific" and "superstitious" cultures.[12] A third group of historians and literary scholars have opened an even more fundamental vein, considering the political roles that discourses of "discovery" came to play in the imperial contests of the late Renaissance and early-modern Atlantic and especially in the development of colonial ideologies.[13] The influence of this scholarship has been profound: it has muddied the neat picture of "scientific progress"; at the same time, it has shown the intellectual and cultural changes afoot during this period to be even more significant than previously assumed.

Still, amidst these varied challenges to traditional notions of early-modern "science," only a few researchers have pursued the weirder entries in the philosophical catalogues of the day—all those "monstrous double-calf[s]," "animals vomited by a child," "shower[s] of fishes," and "petrifying waters" that seventeenth-century

[12] These shared subject matters, discursive strategies and publication networks are variously discussed by Barbara J. Shapiro, *Culture of Fact,* David D. Hall, *Worlds of Wonder*, 71-116; Joy Kenseth, "The Age of the Marvelous: An Introduction," *The Age of the Marvelous,* ed. Joy Kenseth (Hanover, N. H.: Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, 1991); Lorraine Daston and Katherine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature*; Ann Blair, "Humanist Methods in Natural Philosophy: The Commonplace Book," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 53 (1992): 541-51; and David Paul Nord, "Teleology and News: The Religious Roots of American Journalism, 1630-1730," *The Journal of American History* 77 (1990): 9-38.

[13] See especially Chaplin, *Subject Matter*. See also Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions;* Edmundo O'Gorman, *The Invention of America: An Inquiry into the Historical Nature of the New World and the Meaning of its History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1961); Ivo Kamps and Jyotsna G. Singh, eds., *Travel Knowledge: European 'Discoveries' in the Early Modern Period* (New York: Palgrave, 2001); and Campbell, *Wonder and Science.* See also, although she focuses on the eighteenth century and afterwards, Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992). For the most part, discussions of imperialism, discourses of "discovery," and the new science have focused on the sixteenth century or the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The seventeenth often gets skipped. Chaplin offers one of the few thorough forays into that period.

intellectuals found so irresistibly "curious." To be sure, these few scholars[14] have set the history of science in an entirely new light and have offered us glimpses into how literary appetites for natural wonders became a powerful force in cultural and political (especially imperial) contests of the day.

Yet while broadening their lenses to include nontraditional *genres* and *topics*, even these innovative scholars have attended to traditional *sites* for the production of early modern science: the academies in Florence, London, Paris, Schweinfurt, and Berlin or the museum collectors in Italy. None have carefully considered texts written from within the Atlantic colonies themselves. Compounding the problem, Americanist scholars generally have not considered seventeenth-century colonial "science" writing worth studying, reserving their attention for the early exploration period of the sixteenth and very early seventeenth centuries, or, much later, mid-to-late eighteenth century figures like Robert Beverly, Benjamin Franklin, and Thomas Jefferson.[15] While valuable, this

[14] Broad studies that discuss the role of wonders in early modern philosophy include Barbara J. Shapiro, *A Culture of Fact;* Lorraine Daston and Katherine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature;* Joy Kenseth, ed., *The Age of the Marvelous*; Peter Harrison, *The Bible, Protestantism, and the Rise of Natural Science;* David D. Hall, *Worlds of Wonder;* and Daniel Carey, "Compiling Nature's History." Monsters in particular have attracted increased attention by scholars. For helpful but old overviews of monster writings and teratology (the science of monsters), see in particular Rudolf Wittkower, "Marvels of the East: A Study in the History of Monsters," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 5 (1942): 159-97; and C. J. S. Thompson, *The History and Lore of Freaks* (London: Senate, 1930). The most significant recent study is that Katherine Park and Lorraine J. Daston, "Unnatural Conceptions." For connections between teratology and contemporary issues of embodiment and gender, see *Between Monsters, Goddesses, and Cyborgs: Feminist Confrontations with Science, Medicine and Cyberspace,* ed. Nina Lykke and Rosi Braidotti (London: Zed Books, 1996).

[15] The most significant recent exceptions are Joyce Chaplin's *Subject Matter,* Michael P. Winship's examination of Cotton Mather's worldviews in *Seers of God*; and Walter Woodward's dissertation (forthcoming as a monograph), "Prospero's America: John Winthrop, Jr., Alchemy, and the Creation of New England Culture (1606-1676)" (Ph.D. diss., University of Connecticut, 2001). Nevertheless, all investigate seventeenth-century natural historical materials as historians and not, primarily, as readers of the texts' literary or rhetorical qualities. While literature scholar Carla Mulford does discuss one of Cotton Mather's "Curiosa Americana" letters in a recent article on colonial writings about nature (and makes several general conclusions with which I agree), her analysis at many points indicates a lack of familiarity

work has, again, overlooked the wider circulation and public role of seventeenth-century discourse on America's natural wonders. Yet wonders played a vital role in the popular and political culture of the colonies in the period.

"Famously Knowen as Any Thing": Publishing a New England Natural Wonder

> "A compilation, or particular natural history, must be made of all monsters and prodigious births of nature; of every thing, in short, which is new, rare, and unusual in nature. This should be done with a rigorous selection, so as to be worthy of credit."
>
> —Francis Bacon, *Novum Organum,* 1620

> "It was a woman child, stillborn, about two months before the just time, having life a few hours before; [. . .] it had two mouths, and in each of them a piece of red flesh sticking out; it had arms and legs as other children; but, instead of toes, it had on each foot three claws, like a young fowl, with sharp talons."
>
> —John Winthrop, *Journal,* 1638

> "[The monster] was famously knowen, as any thing that ever was seen or done in the land."
>
> —John Eliot, letter to Thomas Brookes, 1660

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with the rest of Mather's "Curiosa" letters and seems not to understand the context in which they were written. Mulford, "New Science and the Question of Identity in Eighteenth-Century British America," in *Finding Colonial Americas: An Introduction*, ed. Carla Mulford and David Shields (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 2001), 79-103. See also several older pieces: Otho T. Beall, Jr., "Cotton Mather's Early 'Curiosa Americana' and the Boston Philosophical Society of 1683," *William and Mary Quarterly* 3rd ser. 18 (1961): 361-72; and George Lyman Kittredge, "Cotton Mather's Scientific Communications to the Royal Society," *American Antiquarian Society* 26 (1916): 18-57.

On a chilly October day in 1637, an American colonist named Mary Dyer went into premature labor with her fourth child. Several midwives assisted Dyer as they knew how, but the female child was stillborn. More notably, she was significantly deformed. In the explosive political atmosphere of 1637 Boston and its controversy with the "Antinomians" (with whom Dyer was associated), the baby was quickly and quietly buried without being publicly registered, as Massachusetts law required. It was a course of action secretly advised by New England's most prestigious (but at that moment, embattled) minister, John Cotton.

In seventeenth-century Massachusetts, however, secrets about strange babies were hard to keep. Soon the story was out and by March 1638, it had taken definitive form in Governor John Winthrop's account of it. He would memorably describe the child as a "monster" with:

> a face, but no head, and the ears stood upon the shoulders and were like an ape's; it had no forehead, but over the eyes four horns, hard and sharp; two of them were above one inch long, the other two shorter; the eyes standing out, and the mouth also; the nose hooked up-ward; all over the breast and back full of sharp pricks and scales, like a thornback; the navel and all the belly, with the distinction of the sex, were where the back should be, and the back and hips before, where the belly should have been; behind, between the shoulders, it had two mouths, and in each of them a piece of red flesh sticking out; it had arms and legs as other

children; but, instead of toes, it had on each foot three claws, like a young fowl, with sharp talons.[16]

It is impossible to know how much this description drew on witnesses' direct observations, how much derived from the frightened imagination of midwife Hawkins, who gave Winthrop this report in a forced and tricked confession, and how much came straight out of the annals of English and continental literature, particularly the ranks of wondrous creatures that had long populated influential wonder books like *Wonders of the East*. Almost certainly, all three played a role.

Whatever the complex equation of its origins, the account seemed to provide just the right mix of the strange and the familiar. It was shocking in a satisfying, exciting way that made people want to share it with others. From Winthrop forward, the tale would be passed from mouth to mouth and shouted from ship to ship, then recorded into journals and commonplace books, composed into depositions, shipped across the Atlantic, published in news pamphlets and religious tracts, and circulated via letter amongst the learned elite in both the colonies and England. At one point in the course of this history, the famous New England missionary to the Indians, John Eliot, would remark that the event had become as "famously knowen, as any thing that ever was seen or done in the land."[17] Eventually, nearly 80 years later, the tale of Mary Dyer's "monster baby" would make at least one more appearance, this time in a Latinate report submitted by Cotton Mather as part of his first series of "Curiosa Americana" letters sent to John Woodward,

[16] John Winthrop, *The Journal of John Winthrop,* 254.

[17] Eliot to Rev. Thomas Brooks, Roxbury, 19 May 1660, transcribed by Johan Winsser, "Mary Dyer and the 'Monster' Story," *Quaker History* 79 (1990): 30-31.

M. D., of the Royal Society. Woodward would, in turn, pass it on along with other wondrous reports from the "new" world of America for publication in the *Philosophical Transactions*—the Royal Society's internationally renowned journal.[18]

If the tale of Mary Dyer's "monster" baby became one of the most widely known and repeated early American narratives, told over and over again by ordinary English speakers in America and England, then we might primarily value it today as an important text of colonial popular culture. Dyer's story certainly offers a fascinating glimpse into a discourse that was influential amongst ordinary colonial Americans.[19] But that popular role was not its only legacy. In the process of being retold and republished, the story was changed to fit the interests of the re-tellers who made it their own, a portion of whom were elite-group writers using colonists' wondrous stories for political purposes that extended beyond internal colonial struggles. Although a (very) few scholars have discussed how this story functioned within the colonies' (internal) Antinomian Controversy,[20] they do not explain why it would have been presented to the Royal Society as a fact of American natural history, especially so long after its initial occurrence. Nor do they explain how a third-generation colonist like Cotton Mather, writing 77 years after the child's birth, came into possession of the report. By pursuing

[18] While tracing the narrative's winding path, I have benefited from Winsser, "Mary Dyer and the 'Monster' Story," 20-34. Winsser also provides a transcription of John Eliot's manuscript letter, previously unidentified.

[19] See David Paul Nord's discussion of the incident and its status as colonial news in "Teleology and the News."

[20] For considerations of Dyer's and Hutchinson's "monstrous" births in the context of the Antinomian Controversy, see Anne Jacobson Schutte, "'Such Monstrous Births': A Neglected Aspect of the Antinomian Controversy," *Renaissance Quarterly* 38 (1985): 85-106; and Valerie Pearl and Morris Pearl, eds., "Governor John Winthrop on the Birth of the Antinomians' 'Monster': The Earliest Reports to Reach England and the Making of a Myth," *Massachusetts Historical Society Proceedings* 102 (1990): 21-37.

the puzzling history and cultural work of early America's most famous story, we begin to unravel connections between popular stories of American wonders, emergent "discourses of fact," and New Englanders' attempts to position America within the English empire of knowledge and possessions. These connections prove key to understanding the means by which colonial writers crafted memorable and authoritative representations of America's nature and its colonists' group identity.

Consider, then, the path taken by Dyer's monster baby story en route to its many publics. It is a wide-roving one. Long before the Quakers' emergence as a trouble-making sect in England (c. 1652), Mary Dyer and her husband had come to Boston (c. 1635) as devout Christians. Dyer was acquainted with fellow Bostonian Ann Hutchinson, a skilled midwife who, by the late 1630s, had become notorious as the woman who started New England's "Antinomian Controversy" (1636-38) when she began to accuse local clergy of emphasizing salvation by works instead of by free grace.[21] In October of 1637, as the troubles surrounding Hutchinson and the so-called "Antinomians" intensified, Dyer delivered her baby with Hutchinson and several others in attendance.

[21] Recent studies of the Antinomian Controversy include my "Re-figuring the Song of Songs: John Cotton's 1655 Sermon and the Antinomian Controversy," *New England Quarterly* 76 (2003): 73-107; Michael J. Colacurcio's "Primitive Comfort: The Spiritual Witness of John Cotton," *ELH* 67 (2000): 655-96; Michael G. Ditmore's "A Prophetess in Her Own Country: An Exegesis of Anne Hutchinson's 'Immediate Revelation,'" *William and Mary Quarterly* 57 (2000): 349-92; and Michael P. Winship's "'The Most Glorious Church in the World': The Unity of the Godly in Boston, Massachusetts, in the 1630s," *Journal of British Studies* 39(2000): 71-98. For somewhat earlier discussions, see also Michael W. Kaufmann's *Institutional Individualism: Conversion, Exile, and Nostalgia in Puritan New England* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994); Janice Knight, *Orthodoxies in Massachusetts: Rereading American Puritanism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), and Michael Schuldiner, *Gifts and Works: The Post-Conversion Paradigm and Spiritual Controversy in Seventeenth-Century Massachusetts* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1991). The standard collection of Antinomian Controversy documents remains David D. Hall's edition *The Antinomian Controversy, 1636-1638: A Documentary History,* 2d ed. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990).

What happened next is hard to say. Even Governor John Winthrop, the author of the affair's most influential account, circulated two conflicting stories of the monster's "discovery" to public officials. In his *Journal,* he first suggests that one of the women in the birthing room was not able "to keep counsel, as the other two [women] did," and thus "some rumor began to spread, that the child was a monster"—a rumor that quickly reached the ears of a church elder, who reported it to Governor Winthrop. Later in his report, Winthrop contradicts this story and argues that the monster's "discovery" was a kind of wonder in itself, an alteration that supports his reading of the "monster" as a public sign that God had condemned Dyer and her "Antinomian" kind. In this second version, the revelation came precisely at the moment when Ann Hutchinson was excommunicated from her church for heresy. When Hutchinson rose to exit the church, writes Winthrop, Mary Dyer alone stood up and walked out alongside her. And at that moment, "a stranger asked, what young woman [Dyer] was. The others answered, it was the woman which had the monster, which gave the first occasion to some that heard it to speak of it." Winthrop characterizes as an "observable" providence that Dyer's monstrosity should become publicly known at the moment she expressed public support for Hutchinson, whom Winthrop considered to be the author of "divers monstrous errors."[22]

The inconsistencies and instabilities in this "most famous" early American tale only multiplied from that point forward, as it became a kind of leitmotif in the Antinomian Controversy. In late January of 1638, Winthrop gathered together a

[22] Winthrop, *Journal*, 253, 255, 255.

magistrate and an elder, and the three men proceeded to interrogate the midwife, a woman named Jane Hawkins. "At first," Winthrop admits, "she confessed only, that the head was defective and misplaced." Not satisfied, the threesome tricked Hawkins. Telling her that Hutchinson already "had revealed all" to them, they pressured her to confess more details about the baby. And "confess" she did. It is this forced (and edited) oral testimony that Winthrop recorded in his journal and used in all his later reports, and it is Winthrop's reports that dominated all subsequent retellings of the "monster."[23]

To empirically verify Hawkins's report, apparently, "the governour, with advice of some other of the magistrates and of the elders of Boston, caused the said monster to be taken up" in early April, writes Winthrop, "and though it were much corrupted," having lain in the ground for more than five months, "yet *most* of those things were to be seen, as the horns and claws, the scales, etc," he quickly remarks.[24] Clearly, *some* "of those things" were *not* to be seen, the sentence implies. Nonetheless, for two powerful reasons this equivocation did not damage the narrative's rhetorical effectiveness.

First, its presentation as the detailed eye-witness testimony of a skilled midwife, verified with a later eye-witness observation by the colony's governor, drew on the increasingly authoritative "discourses of fact" emerging in the seventeenth century. Rather than claiming to have developed anything approaching a masterful "science," a term applied only in the eighteenth century to their work, early modern natural philosophers did claim to have begun to carefully *document*—to write "fact"-oriented *histories*—of the world they observed with their own eyes, rather than base their

[23] Winthrop, *Journal*, 253.

[24] Winthrop, *Journal*, 255, emphasis mine.

expertise on the information repeated in ancient textual sources. Travel reports, histories, philosophical articles, news reports, and chorographies (a kind of report on a country's major institutions, infrastructure, and economics) could all offer themselves as natural histories or as containing natural historical information. The genres were not well defined, and the discursive hallmarks of the emerging natural philosophy (which were themselves significantly derived from the law courts' standards for fact-finding and evidence) were exerting their influence across the discourses.

As science historian Barbara Shapiro has shown, these hallmarks included focusing on "matters of fact," the truth of which matters were, as in the law courts, to be decided by those hearing the evidence; conveying evidence about a "matter of fact;" asserting eye-witness, rather than second- or third-hand, observation of the "fact" in question; insisting upon the credibility of witnesses (without necessarily tying credibility to social rank); and adequately treating or composing documentary sources (a kind of surrogate first-hand witness) about a "matter of fact" so that readers or other "judges" could determine the truth of the "fact" under question. Such reports of investigations into nature, especially in the first three quarters of the seventeenth century, usually recorded witnessed *experiences*, rather than artificially arranged *experiments*. Whether shaping a submission for the Royal Society's *Philosophical Transactions,* a history of a city or region, or a report of a monster baby, all of these strategies ensured that a "fact" report would carry textual authority as a truthful representation.[25]

[25] Barbara J. Shapiro, *Culture of Fact*, 8-33, 105-167.

To this formulation as "fact," Winthrop added a much older philosophical and literary rhetoric—the rhetoric of monsters. The monster rhetoric drew significantly on medieval and Renaissance literatures of monstrous races—races often characterized by their transposition of body parts (a mouth where the chest should be, a face where the buttocks should be), or the transposition of one species' features onto the body of another species (horns on a human head, a fish tail on the body of a lion).[26] Dyer's baby, as described by Winthrop, exhibited both types of classic monster transpositions. Moreover, as Lorraine Daston and Katherine Park have shown, Protestants had been using monsters as tools in theological controversy for years, as Luther's and Melanchthon's report of the monstrous "pope-ass" (presented as a kind of material evidence against the "Romish Antichrist") had done in 1523.[27]

Coupling the new discourse of "fact" with the old rhetoric of monsters, Winthrop's story incorporated carefully chosen, iconic, and memorably disgusting physical details of the midwife's tale—her characterization of this child as having a back in place of the belly, a belly where the back should be, pricks and scales "like a thornback," horns on her head, the "nose hooked upward," and holes in the back each with "a piece of red flesh sticking out"—and made these details credible to both learned readers and popular audiences alike. Winthrop's account was, thus, more than an act of "public cruelty," as one historian has alleged (though it was certainly that, too);[28] it was an iteration, according to newly authoritative rhetorical forms, of a well-known genre

[26] See note 15 in this chapter on monster and teratology scholarship.

[27] Park and Daston, "Unnatural Conceptions," 26-30.

[28] Johan Winsser, "Mary Dyer and the 'Monster' Story," 20.

with reliable cultural cachet. This formula proved tenaciously memorable and repeatable. And as we will see in this chapter, Winthrop's crafting of an unusual natural *event*—the birth of a malformed, stillborn child—into a repeatable *narrative* was no isolated feat. This transmutation would be performed by numerous other colonial leaders over the course of the century, as they took ordinary colonists' bizarre, wondrous experiences and edited the narratives into credible, powerful rhetoric ready for transatlantic audiences, who were both fascinated and frightened by the Americas and unsure of what to think of the peoples settled there.

How far did the tale travel once it achieved authoritative form? Winthrop began telling it as widely as possible and, to make sure it was observed in England, wrote a deposition of it which he then shipped to the crown. By June, 1638, his account was spreading fast. As the English traveler and natural historian John Josselyn, still at sea, approached the American shore, his ship passed "two sail bound for *New-found-land,*" and from one of the ships to his own the story was shouted: "they told us of general Earth-quake in *New-England*, of the birth of a Monster at *Boston*." By September, Josselyn would learn in more detail that the monster "was born at *Boston* of one Mrs. *Dyer*, a great Sectarie, *the Nine and twentieth of* June*, it was (it should seem) without a head, but having horns like a Beast*, *and ears, scales on a rough skin like a fish called a* Thornback, *legs and claws like a* Hawke*, and in other respects as a Woman-Child*."[29] Also in September, the Reverend Edmund Browne would write a letter to the English

[29] John Josselyn, *Two Voyages to New-England*, 12, 23.

nobleman Sir Simonds D'Ewes describing the "monster" in details that followed Winthrop's account exactly and added the following elaboration:

> The women called to the travail were taken with great vomiting (although fasting) before the very act of bringing forth, and were sent for home with all speed because (then and not before or since) their children were taken with convulsions, by which means only two [midwives] being left and one asleep besides midwife Hawkis [sic] (of the same stamp with her [Dyer]) when she was delivered, at which time there was a great stink and the bed shaked.[30]

Browne's additional circumstantial evidence furthered the story's rhetorical reach, conveying that a kind of plague, marked by a powerful stench, had come upon the city during the baby's birthing. Such details, again, drew upon long-established literary formula: they were traditional features in narratives of witchcraft and demonic possession. In the American colonies, the tendency of witches and demons to induce "convulsions" in children would appear most famously in the notorious fits of Salem's writhing girls. And like Browne's "great stink," the devil's famous arrival amongst the Ursuline nuns at Loudun (France) had been marked, historian Michel de Certeau notes, by the presence of an odor. At Loudun, in fact, scent actually became the *means* by which the devil purportedly took possession of the nuns.[31] Similarly, the famous narrative of the

[30] Edmund Browne, Letter to Simonds D'Ewes, Boston, 7 September 1638, in *Letters from New England: The Massachusetts Bay Colony, 1629-1638*, ed. Everett Emerson (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1976), 230.

[31] De Certeau concludes that "The experience of contagion by smell reappears in the seventeenth century both in medical diagnosis and spiritual discernment. . . . Olfactory perception is a principle of discernment.

drumming demon at Tedworth, repeatedly printed in Joseph Glanvill's wonder collections (and recited in numerous other publications, including one of Increase Mather's), emphasized that the demon's arrivals at and departures from the tormented man's house were announced by a "Sulphurous smell" or "noysome smell."[32] (Notably, Glanvill was a Fellow of the Royal Society and also couched his narratives carefully in the discourse of "fact"). With a few deft strokes, Browne expanded the monster baby story's implications, making the baby serve as empirical evidence not just for the ubiquity of wonders in America or for Dyer's heresy, but also for the devil's presence in America—a kind of wonder we will consider further in the next chapter.

In the same year that Browne wrote his account, John Winthrop, Jr., son of Governor John Winthrop, wrote to his friend, Edward Howes, about the monster. Winthrop, Jr. would not only become the governor of Connecticut in 1657, but he would also become in 1662 the first colonial member of the Royal Society.[33] Winthrop, Jr.'s interest in the monster baby, thoroughly in line with his fellow natural philosophers' interests in monsters, shows why we ought not dismiss the circulation of such narratives merely as malicious bigotry against religious dissidents or as the silliness of backward colonials. The monster baby report was important for men like Winthrop, Jr. and Edward

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Like a cook's palate, it judges reality and qualifies it." Michel de Certeau, *The Possession at Loudun*, 31, 34.

[32] Joseph Glanvill, *A Blow at Modern Sadducism in some Philosophical Considerations about Witchcraft. And the Relation of the Famed Disturbance at the House of M. Mompesson with Reflections on Drollery, and Atheisme* (London, 1668), 123, 131. The story of the Tedworth drummer first appeared in Glanvill's 1668 collection, an enlarged edition of his earlier work, *A Philosophical Endeavour towards the Defense of the Being of Witches and Apparitions* (London, 1666) and it reached its widest circulation in Henry More's expanded, posthumous edition of Glanvill's collection, *Saducismus Triumphatus; or, Full and Plain evidence Concerning Witches and Apparitions* (London, 1681, 1682, 1688, 1689, 1700).

[33] Robert Black, *The Younger John Winthrop* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966), 177, 218.

Howes (and later in the century, as we will see, for the famous missionary to the Indians, John Eliot, as well as the influential nonconformist English clergyman, Richard Baxter[34]) because the status of monsters and other natural wonders was changing during the years between Dyer's childbirth and her eventual hanging on Boston Common.

Between the early seventeenth century and 1660, when Dyer was hanged, monsters had been transformed from stock figures in travel narratives and wonder books to important "facts" of natural history. "In the most popular literature such events were originally treated as divine prodigies, and popular interest in them was sparked and fuelled by the religious conflicts of the Reformation," note Daston and Park in their work on this transformation. But, "as the period progressed, they appeared more and more as natural wonders—signs of nature's fertility rather than God's wrath. Bacon, strongly influenced by this attitude, adopted the study of monsters as one of three coequal parts in his refurbished scheme for natural history—a scheme which inspired the early efforts of the Royal Society."[35] Intellectuals had begun to read monsters differently. Why? With the rise of Protestant interpretive practices, Peter Harrison argues, philosophers ceased reading natural objects as allegorical symbols. This "denial of allegory" opened up the possibility of viewing the natural world in and of itself, rather than reducing its objects to signifiers of other things. Harrison argues that,

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[34] Richard Baxter's most well-known works are *The Saints' Everlasting Rest* (London, 1650); *The Reformed Pastor* (London, 1656); *The Certainty of the World of Spirits* (London, 1691); and the *Reliquiae Baxterianae, or Mr. Richard Baxter's Narrative of the Most Memorable Passages of His Life and Times* (London, 1696).

[35] Katherine Park and Lorraine Daston, "Unnatural Conceptions," 23.

> To insist now that texts be read literally was to cut short a potentially endless chain of references in which words referred to things, and things in turn referred to other things. . . . The assertion of the primacy of literal reading, in other words, entailed a new, non-symbolic conception of the nature of things. . . As an inevitable consequence of this way of reading texts nature would lose its meaning, and the vacuum created by this loss of intelligibility was gradually to be occupied by alternative accounts of the significance of natural things – those explanations which we regard as scientific.[36]

By 1663, the English clergyman John Spencer could interpret a wide range of strange phenomena in his *Discourse Concerning Prodigies* "not as signs from the Lord," writes historian Michael P. Winship, "but in Baconian terms as anomalies of nature with no signification."[37] Dyer's baby thus lay in the rich, muddy space where various approaches to natural wonders mixed. Athough the monster baby had originally functioned as a kind of allegory in connection to the Antinomian Controversy and Ann Hutchinson (who had also given birth to a "monster" baby at about the same time), by mid-century it was important in its own right as a Baconian natural fact.

In addition to highly educated readers, the monster baby narrative also appealed to popular audiences for its sensational details and its shape as a political morality fable.

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[36] Peter Harrison, *The Bible, Protestantism, and the Rise of Natural Science,* 114.

[37] Winship, *Seers of God*, 38. Spencer had to acknowledge that Anne Hutchinson's and Mary Dyer's babies were prodigious (and thus spiritually significant) because they were "monstrous beyond the possibilities of Nature," but he argued that interpreting them was impossible, since it must proceed "by blind & uncertain guesses" [John Spencer, *A Discourse Concerning Prodigies*, 2d ed. (London, 1665), 364].

In 1642, the story first appeared in Puritan-controlled England in an anonymous tract entitled *Newes from New-England of A Most Strange and Prodigious Birth, brought to Boston in New-England, October the 17*. Again, the tract closely followed Winthrop's first report. Subsequently, the story appeared in several tracts and books condemning Hutchinson and the Antinomians.[38] At this point, the story found influence among popular audiences not simply because it was shocking, but also because its details were, at the same time, so predictable—as recognizable cultural types and also as signs of the spiritual battles in which their publishers, often clergy, were engaged. As Anne Schutte has noted, the widespread publication of the Dyer monster baby story coincided with 5 other monster baby reports published in London in the 1640s and early 50s, such as *The Ranters Monster: being a true Relation of one Mary Adams, living at Tillingham in Essex, who named herself the Virgin Mary, blasphemously affirming that she was conceived with child by the Holy Ghost: with the manner how she was delivered of the ugliest ill-shapen Monster that ever eyes beheld, and afterwards rotted away in prison*.[39] Trouble-making spiritual women, at least for a brief time in the seventeenth century,

[38] *Antinomians and Familists Condemned by the Synod of Elders in New England* (London, 1644); this book was republished in the same year under the title, *A Short Story of the Rise, reign, and ruine of the Antinomians, Familists, Libertines* (London, 1644). A third tract against the antinomians mentioned the story in 1648, the Scottish Presbyterian Samuel Rutherford's *Survey of the Spirituall Antichrist, Opening the Secrets of Familisme and Antinomianisme* (London, 1648).

[39] In 1640 one could read *A Certain Relation of the Hog-faced Gentlewoman called Mistris Tannakin Skinner* [. . .] *Who was bewitched in her mother's wombe in the yeare 1618, and hath lived ever since unknown in this kind to any, but her Parents and few other neighbors.* By 1642, when the first Dyer report appeared in London, readers might also have learned of *A Strange Accident that happened lately at Mears-Ashby of one Mary Wilmore, who was delivered of a childe without a head and credibly reported to have a firme cross on the brest.* In the years 1645 and 1646, respectively, publishers made available the stories of *The most Strange Apperation of blood in a poole at Garraton in Leicestershire; also the true relation of a miraculous birth in Shoo-lane where one Mistres Browne a cutlers wife was delivered of a monster*; and *A Declaration of a strange Monster born in Kirkham in Lancashire, the Childe of Mrs. Haughton, a Popish Gentlewoman, after the mother had curst the Parliament*.

would be clearly marked as "monsters" by the progeny of their wombs.[40] With monster babies a rare yet increasingly identifiable quantity, the "monstrous" birth of Dyer's fetus was able to become a historical time-marker when New Englander Samuel Danforth published it in his almanac's general calendar as a "memorable occurrence" of 1637.

As the narrative traveled and picked up new meanings—associations with witchcraft and demonic possession, "scientific" (natural philosophical) significance, popular usage in calendars as a time marker—it never lost its original function as a form of political discourse. Eventually, in the most surprising turn of its cultural career, the 1637 narrative made its way to the Royal Society via the natural history reports of Cotton Mather's 1713-14 "Curiosa Americana" letters, where it and other American "matters of fact" took an additional political face as evidence for New England's exceptional nature. In response to Royal Society fellow John Woodward's request for natural history reports about America, Mather sent his first packet of 13 letters to Woodward in 1714, and he devoted one of them to recounting the story of Dyer's monster baby and four other New England monstrous births. Composed entirely in Latin (the only Latin-language letter in

[40] In May of 1660, for example, after the Quakers had begun to challenge to New England's orthodoxy and less than a month before Boston's General Court hanged Mary Dyer, by then a Quaker preacher, on Boston Common, the New England minister John Eliot sat down to write a letter which he would then ship across the Atlantic to Thomas Brookes, a Puritan rector of St. Mary Magdalen's. Eliot stated that he intended to "ansr that desire of Mr Baxter [the famous noncomformist clergyman] . . . about the monster." Although New England's brutal oppression of Quakers had already begun to receive harsh censure at home and abroad, Eliot's letter quietly makes it clear that Dyer was no political innocent; more than twenty years earlier she had birthed a documented monster. "Lett him [Baxter] understand," Eliot declared gravely, "this thing is exceedingly true & certen (agt all gainsayings of men that desire to blind truth)." Indeed, he indicated, no one in New England was likely to forget, since "these credible persons (men you know of great integrity) & the rest of the witnesses declared this fully to my self & 1000 of others. that it was famously knowen, as any thing that ever was seen or done in the land and uncontradictable in those places; even by the Opinionists thems[elves]." It remained only to convince outsiders of Dyer's guilt and of the colonists' political right to hang her. Sharing these "credible persons'" testimony of the wonder was the most efficacious way to do that. See Eliot, Letter to Thomas Brookes, in Winsser, "Mary Dyer," 30-31.

the 13-letter packet) and thus ready-made for transnational readerships, the letter opens by playing on the Latin root of "monster," the verb *monstrare*—meaning to demonstrate, show. Here, Mather reverses the rationale granting importance to this narrative. Rather than demonstrating the outcast status of Mary Dyer and her "monstrous" opinions, the report uses the appearance of monsters in New England to characterize America and Americans as a whole. After discussing learned men's opinions on monsters, Mather suggests that regardless of their learning, such philosophical writers did not have the access to primary cases that he has as an American. Such important but rare natural phenomena as monsters proliferate far away from London or Paris. "Not only Africa, but also America itself, in fact, has her own monsters, and New England itself is not at all empty of Monsters," he explains. In an almost complete turnabout, Dyer's monster baby serves as a revealing representation of New England, a showing, or demonstration, of the value of American nature.[41]

The crossover here described between popular and elite-group discourse is itself a curious phenomenon, one that documents how leaders appropriated for political purposes natural facts drawn from colonists' experiences. To better understand the processes whereby colonial wonder narratives became transformed into elite philosophical discourse, it is useful now to explore the connections between philosophers' writings and the experiences of ordinary individuals. Inspecting how the stories traveled to men like Winthrop in the first place reveals an interwoven network of commoners, clergymen, and

[41] Cotton Mather to John Woodward, November 21, 1712, Massachusetts Historical Society, Frederick Lewis Gay transcripts of Cotton Mather's letters to the Royal Society, fols. 56-64.

natural philosophers that ultimately enabled stories about America's natural wonders to serve as representations of American colonial identity.

Gathering the Facts: The Wonder Networks

The ubiquity of wonder texts in the seventeenth century, especially reports of wondrous natural phenomena (monsters, celestial apparitions, strange plants, thunder and lightning, bizarre diseases, rains of blood, and unusual minerals) directly resulted from collection projects established during the century for observing, recording, and then reporting wonders. These projects have generally gone unnoticed by scholars and historians. Historians of science, to be sure, have carefully studied how Henry Oldenburg, first Secretary of the Royal Society of London, sought information from the widest possible range of informants around the world, even including unlearned observers such as Atlantic sailors, in order to collect first-hand observations of unknown places and things for the Society. Oldenburg's extensive correspondence provides a broad window into the means by which English natural philosophers, convinced of the importance of first-hand observation, nevertheless attempted to gain information about unseen parts of the world.[42] Soon the Royal Society as a whole took up and regularized Oldenburg's practice, composing elaborate guidelines instructing travelers on how to make accurate observations and on what things, in particular, to observe.[43]

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[42] A. Rupert Hall and Marie Boas Hall, ed. and trans., *The Correspondence of Henry Oldenburg,* 13 vols. (Volumes I-IX, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1965-1973; Volumes X-XI, London: Mansell, 1975-1977; Volumes XII-XIII, London: Taylor & Francis, 1986).

[43] The Royal Society drew up and distributed "articles of inquiry" for travelers. They first announced their plans for such inquiries in 1661; a set of "General Inquiries" were drawn up in 1664 and printed in the *Philosophical Transactions* the following year. See Henry Oldenburg, *Correspondence*, I, 79; II, 65; III,

Yet to date, no one has considered how the fact-gathering networks established by early members of the Royal Society drew from a second set of fact-gathering networks established by Protestant clergy all over England and the continent, networks put to particularly careful use in New England. These projects proved to be discourse-producing machines, enlisting the entire colonial population in the production of stories and reports about New England's most exciting features and events, and bringing notable texts—stories, "facts," reports—out of individuals' private spheres of observation and into public circulation. Once public, such accounts were able to serve as tools for establishing public consensus about New England's identity and America's exceptional qualities. To begin fathoming these massive efforts, in this section I trace three overlapping fact-collection networks begun over the course of the seventeenth century in England and New England. The first was organized in 1646 by the United Colonies of New England; the second in the late 1650s and early 1660s by Charles II and the Royal Society; the third in the early 1680s by a group of clergy in Boston, particularly Increase Mather. By placing each collection project in its historical—and deeply political—context, we begin to discern not only how these narratives were produced, but also the broader rhetorical purposes they were made to serve.

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168. In 1681, Robert Hooke sought to make such collections more accurate by giving seamen more particular instructions. See Robert Hooke's preface in Robert Knox, *A Historical Relation of the Island of Ceylon* (1681) and Oldenburg, *Correspondence*, III, 34. Robert Boyle ultimately produced such guidelines with his *General Heads for the Natural History of a Country, Great or Small Drawn Out for the Use of Travellers and Navigators* (London, 1692). Boyle felt that travel books played a crucial role in providing natural philosophers with eyewitness accounts of natural phenomena. John Woodward's *Brief Instructions for making Observations in all parts of the World* (London, 1696) also instructed travelers. In 1713 the government ordered ambassadors, admirals, and officers to "receive directions and instructions from the Royal Society for making enquiries relating to the improvement of natural philosophy." For a general discussion of the Royal Society and travel reporting, see Barbara Shapiro, *Culture of Fact,* 73-74.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Reformation theology taught Protestants to observe their lives for signs of conversion and God's intervention.[44] At the same time, as historian Peter Harrison has argued, the Reformation replaced traditional, allegorical methods of interpreting the world with more literal approaches, and so Protestants began carefully observing nature to understand God's creation rather than reading it as an elaborate scheme of allegories.[45] In tandem, these two orientations encouraged Protestants to devote significant attention to the observation of wondrous or otherwise significant phenomena in their lives.

In the early years of colonization, however, New England leaders officially declared that colonists should pursue such observation not just privately, but also as a collective, public endeavor—one oriented towards creating a history of the colonial group in America, compiling a record of the significant facts revealed in that place (America) for those people (New Englanders). The declaration was made in 1646 by the Commissioners for the recently formed United Colonies of New England,[46] who officially decreed

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[44] William Perkins, according to Edmund S. Morgan, defined this process so carefully as to "identif[y] ten stages in an individual's acquisition of faith"—stages for which believers attentively watched (*Visible Saints: The History of a Puritan Idea* [New York: New York University Press, 1963], 68). The public confessions from Thomas Shepard's congregants continue to provide the standard archive for studying colonial American conversion rhetoric. See *God's Plot: Puritan Spirituality in Thomas Shepard's Cambridge*, rev. and exp. ed., ed. Michael McGiffert (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1994). A new study of how colonial New Englanders sought evidence of their conversion and used the new science is forthcoming from Sarah Rivett in her in-progress dissertation, "Evidence of Grace: The Science of the Soul in Colonial New England."

[45] Peter Harrison, *The Bible, Protestantism, and the Rise of Natural Science*.

[46] To my knowledge, the only scholarly history fully documenting this institution remains Harry M. Ward's highly sympathetic *The United Colonies of New England*.

> that all the Colonies (as they may) would collect and gather up the many speciall prouidences of God towards them, since their arrivall and setling in these partes . . . and that memorialls beinge made, they may be duly comunicated and seriously considered, that no thinge be mistaken, but that history may be compiled according to truth with due weight by some able and fitt man appointed therevnto.[47]

By "speciall prouidences," the United Colonies Commissioners meant events indicating unusual or remarkable ways that God had directed human affairs above and beyond the means of "ordinary providence," which was thought to guide normal daily life in the universe.[48] Special providences included all kinds of events the colonists saw as remarkable facts not previously encountered or documented, yet natural because they happened in and through God's creation. Notoriously, for example, the settlers celebrated God's special providence at work when, just prior to the colonists' arrival in America, thousands of indigenous Americans mysteriously died and emptied the land around the Massachusetts and Plymouth settlements. It was also considered providence, as we have seen, when a ship wrecked but its passengers survived.

Providential events such as these had proved important to a variety of groups. They had played a prominent role in English and continental religious culture for

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[47] David Pulsifer, ed., *Acts of the C ommissioners of the United Colonies of New England*, vol. IX of *Records of the Colony of New Plymouth in New England*, 12 vols., ed. Nathaniel B. Shurtleff and David Pulsifer (Boston, 1859), 82-83.

[48] Unlike ordinary providence, a special providence was an *un*usual occurrence – one that wouldn't occur without God's specific will modifying the normal course of events. Although a special providence required God's intervention, it was not yet a miracle, which required the complete suspension of the universe's natural order. Rather, a special providence was presumed to be achieved *through* God's established natural means. The definitive discussion of providentialism is Michael P. Winship's *Seers of God*.

hundreds of years by drawing upon medieval Catholicism's discourse of miracles, even as Protestant writers appropriated this dicourse to displace Catholic beliefs (as John Foxe did most famously with his hugely popular *Acts and Monuments* [1563]). In the wake of Frances Bacon's call in the *Novum Organum* for a history of marvels, natural historians had also become distinctly curious about events that seemed unusual or that presented a violation of the normal order of the world. The 1646 United Colonies Commissioners, however, were a political body and not just a group of clergy or philosophers, and the wonders they wished collected were to serve political—not merely religious or philosophical—ends. What kind of political function might such narratives have served? The Commissioners' decree indicated that they sought to write a "history" of their group—"that history may be compiled according to truth." In particular, they wanted a history that would reflect all the ways in which God had treated them with special favor, rather than a history (in our modern sense) that portrayed their difficult day-to-day operations in territory thoroughly occupied by native inhabitants who had increasingly begun to complain, according to the Commissioners' own records, that they were "almost ruyned, and the English . . . the cause of it."[49] In the face of damning critiques by both the Dutch and the local Indians, the leadership sought to defend their project by means of marvelous self-representations.

That darker, more politically damaging history is revealed in the Commissioners' internal records for the year 1646—private records whose contents they wished replaced by "speciall providences" for public audiences in England and abroad. In 1646, the New

[49] *Acts of the Commissioners of the United Colonies*, IX: 68.

England colonies faced the threat of war with local native populations. By September of 1646, their troubles with the Indians had increased so greatly that they determined to attack and capture any Indian groups who even harbored suspected offenders against the United Colonies. Capturing large numbers of Indians, however, posed new problems. Because "it wil be chargeable keeping Indians in prisone," the Commissioners flatly reasoned in their meetings, they agreed that such prisoners should be enslaved or "shipped out and exchanged for Negroes as the cause will iustly beare," if the guilty parties still would not make "satisfaction" to the English for their perceived injuries. While aware that such a policy was a "severe (though iust proceedinge)," the Commissioners insisted that they "could at present finde noe better means to preserue the peace of the Colonies (all the forementioned outrages and insolencies tendinge to an open war considered."[50]

In a haunting echo of early Spanish practices, the Commissioners decided that this severe policy might look better if, "before any such seysure be made in any plantacion of Indians the ensueinge declaration be published and a copy of it givene to the particular sagamores." The declaration they composed, though relatively short, was written in formal English as one exceedingly long, complex sentence. After a preamble, it declared that "if any Sagamor, or plantacion of Indians after notice and due warninge entertaine, hide, protect, keepe, convey away or further the escape of any such offendor or offendors, the English will require satisfaccion of such Indian Sagamore or Indian plantacions, and

[50] *Acts of the Commissioners of the United Colonies*, IX: 70-71.

if they deny it, they [the English] will right themselues as they may vpon such as soe maintaine them that doe the wronge."[51]

It is unlikely that the Commissioners were ignorant that this tactic (justifying attacks against Indians by publishing, before the attack, formal, written declarations to uncomprehending natives) had been employed by the Spanish and famously vilified by Bartolome de Las Casas in his *Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies*.[52] The practice stood as a well-known example of how European jurors had reduced international law to a mere rhetorical trick as they attempted to mask their atrocities in legal guise. Aware of Las Casas or not, the Commissioners would never have viewed wordy letters posted for Indians who did not read English as a truly *effective* form of diplomacy. Such an act was, instead, a recognizable tactic that would have enabled the colonists to represent themselves to other English or European audiences as having behaved in legal, "iust" ways. This publication of legal discourse was, then, an attempt to ground their practices in a legal *fact*. Given the Spanish precedent, however, such a fact

[51] *Acts of the Commissioners of the United Colonies*, IX: 71.

[52] Historian Anthony Pagden describes the Spaniards' practice as a simple fraud: "In 1513, in an attempt to silence any further protest, the jurist Juan Lopez de Palacios Rubios, one of King Ferdinand's ideologues, drew up a document known as the 'Requirement' (or *Requerimento*). This began with a history of the world since Adam. It then moved swiftly on to the grant made by the Pope to the Castilian Crown and the obligation of every Indian to pay homage to the agents of the Crown and to obey their orders. It finished with a gruesome account of what would befall any Indian who refused to obey. Every conquistador was to carry a copy of this document with him and to read it, in the presence of a notary, before making an attack. The facts that the document was in Spanish, a language no Indian could then understand, that it made no attempt to explain the complex legal and theological terms in which it was expressed, and that it was frequently read at night to sleeping villages or out of earshot of Indians were disregarded." Pagden, Introduction to Bartolome de las Casas, *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies,* ed. and trans. Nigel Griffin (London: Penguin, 1992), xxiv-xxv.

would prove much less effective at fortifying the colonists' public identity as godly, special, and "iust" people than facts of wonder.[53]

Tensions with local indigenous groups, not surprisingly, continued, even as the Commissioners attempted to publicly foreground their "iust" political negotiations with them.[54] To complicate matters, the English had begun to quarrel with the Dutch over land and trading posts in a contested region, a quarrel that included a dispute over an Indian woman who had married a Dutch man but whom the English said was an English slave. Such a servant," the English argued, "is parte of her Masters estate, and a more considerable part then a beast" and concluded that if such slaves were permitted to run away, "our children will not longe be secure if this be suffered." The Dutch, insisting on their land rights and maintaining that the "Barbarian handmaide . . . is no slaue but a free woeman, because she was neither taken in war, nor bought with price, but was in former time placed with me by her parents for education," accused the colonists, again, of inhumanity and illegal proceedings towards American natives.[55] The Dutch leader concluded that "we protest against all you Comissioners mett at the Red Mounte as against breakers of the comon league, and alsoe infringers of the speciall right of the Lords, the States our superiours, in that ye haue dared without expresses and speciall Comission to hould yor generall meetinge within the limites of New Netherlande."[56] Worse yet, the 1646 records cite "how the purity and power both of religion and of Ciuill

[53] See Shapiro, *Culture of Fact*, 8-33.

[54] *Acts of the Commissioners of the United Colonies*, IX: 72-82.

[55] "*Acts of the Commissioners of the United Colonies*, IX: 64.

[56] *Acts of the Commissioners of the United Colonies*, IX: 77.

order is already much complayned, if not wholy lost in a parte of New England, by a licentious liberty graunted and setled, whereby many casting off the rule of the word, professe and practise what is goode in theire owne eyes."[57] Not only had the Indians and the Dutch posed both practical and legal threats to the colonies' success, but the English colonists themselves—licentious and irreverent towards civil authorities—were not nearly as pious and orderly a people as their promoters had so frequently claimed.

In this context, the Commissioners' call for the people to collect stories of marvelous occurrences—the final item of business in the 1646 records—emerges as a gesture intended to regain rhetorical control over the colonies' narrative of identity and turn public attention towards what had been achieved. If God's approval could not be found in affairs of state or domestic policy, perhaps in the unusual interstices, where the natural, social, and divine worlds intermingled in strange ways, signs would appear that would vouchsafe for the colony. If a providence were "remarkable" enough—exciting enough to be widely remarked upon by those who heard it and passed it on—then as a political tool, the tale might spread far enough and prove powerful enough to counter these damaging representations of the colonists as Spanish-like brutal slaveholders violating others' land rights.

In the wake of the Commissioners' decree, not surprisingly, scores of colonial providence tales of wonders and "remarkables" appeared, passing through a series of hands before reaching publication. Their first collection points were, almost certainly, taverns, parlors, church halls, and road intersections—any place where colonists met to

[57] *Acts of the Commissioners of the United Colonies*, IX: 81.

discuss the happenings in their lives and communities.[58] After an individual had heard about, or even directly witnessed, something wondrous, the tale would often then be entered into a commonplace book (for more educated colonists) or diary.[59] From the commonplace books and diaries, stories of wonders often traveled to ministers or colonial leaders, who would either record the narratives themselves (as Governor John Winthrop did throughout his *Journal*, or as John Eliot did in his records for the church in Roxbury),[60] investigate and then document the matters themselves (as Samuel Willard did when notified of Elizabeth Knapp's demonic possession (1671-2)),[61] or pass them along in letters to other ministers and leaders.[62]

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[58] On early modern English women's participation in such arenas of discourse, see Bernard Capp's recent study, *When Gossips Meet: Women, Family, and Neighbourhood in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003). See also Hall, *Worlds of Wonder*, 71-116.

[59] John Pike (1653-1710), pastor of the First Church of Dover, New Hampshire, did so in his diary, kept from 1673 through November 22 1709. He recorded "Memorandum of Personal Occurences"; "Observable Providences," and "Observable Seasons." His manuscript diary is held by the Massachusetts Historical Society. See also John Dane's short life narrative, written for his descendants, "A Declaration of Remarkable Providences in the Course of My Life," *The New England Historical and Genealogical Register*, VIII (1854), 149-56; and the commonplace-book jottings of the third-generation John Winthrop, F. R. S. (1681-1741), "Commonplace Book," Winthrop Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society. On the general role of commonplace books in the emergence of early modern science, see Ann Blair, "Humanist Methods in Natural Philosophy: the Commonplace Book," 541-551.

[60] John Eliot, "Rev. John Eliot's Records of the First Church in Roxbury, Mass," *The New-England Historical and Genealogical Register* 33 (1879), 62-65, 236-39, 295-99. See also the Correspondence between the Commissioners of Albany, New York, and Captain A. Brockholles, January 1681, in E. B. O'Callaghan, ed., *The Documentary History of the State of New York* (Albany, N. Y., 1850), III, 882-883.

[61] Samuel Willard, "A Brief Account of a Strange and Unusuall Providence of God, Befallen to Elizabeth Knapp of Groton, per me Samuel Willard" in *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society* 4th ser. 8 (1868), 555-571.

[62] See, for example, a variety of letters sent by various ministers and leaders to Increase Mather between 1681 and 1684 providing information for his wonder collection: John Bishop to Increase Mather, 3 June 1682; John Bishop to Increase Mather, 16 July, 1682; John Whiting to Increase Mather, 23 January 1681/82; and Hannah Jones to Increase Mather, 8 September, 1682, *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society* 4th ser. 8 (1868): 309, 311, 464, 609. Anthony Thacher's account of his sea providence, discussed in the previous chapter, also first appeared in a letter to his brother. Anthony Thacher to Peter Thacher, September 1635, *Letters from New England,* 167-173.

At this node in the network, some of these accounts were made available to a transatlantic public as "histories," almanacs, sermon anecdotes, or even individual tracts. Edward Johnson's *Wonder-Working Providence* (London, 1654) is the earliest example of a providence-oriented "history." Later would come Nathaniel Morton's *New England's Memoriall* (Cambridge, Mass., 1669) and, much later, Cotton Mather's massive *Magnalia Christi Americana* (London, 1702). But readers not interested in reading such long works would have found major events—like the birth of Mary Dyer's "monster" baby—appearing as short entries in almanacs soon after the event itself.[63] Pamphlet writers tended to discuss the most dramatic of wonders: earthquakes, comets, or other major meterological events.[64] Sermons, delivered orally and then often printed, also provided a way of making these narratives even more broadly available.[65]

Learned recipients of wonder stories would often pass such tales along to international audiences. A few colonial ministers or educated leaders, coming into possession of interesting and wondrous facts, wrote up the narratives as reports and shipped them across the Atlantic to members of the Royal Society or other interested

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[63] On the ubiquity of wonders in early American almanacs, see David D. Hall, *Worlds of Wonder*, 58-61, 81-83.

[64] See, for example, *The Narrative of the Most Dreadful Tempest, Hurricane, or Earthquake in Holland . . . the 22 of Jul last* . . . (Cambridge, 1674).

[65] Examples of such wonder-oriented sermons abound. See, for example, Increase Mather's *Wo to Drunkards* (Cambridge, Mass., 1673); Cotton Mather's *Terribilia Dei* (Boston, 1697); Samuel Danforth, *An Astronomical Description of the Late Comet or Blazing Star, as it Appeared in New-England in the 9th, 10th, 11th, and in the Beginning of the 12th Moneth, 1664. Together with a Brief Theological Application Thereof* (Cambridge, 1665); and Thomas Doolittle, *Earthquakes Explained and Practically Improved: Occasioned by the Late Earthquake on Sept. 8, 1692, in London, Many Other Parts in England, and Beyond the Sea (*Boston, 1693).

parties there.[66] This stage of the collection process was taken a step further as a result of the formation of the Boston Philosophical Society (founded 1683), which sought to collect wonders for the purposes of natural history (rather than "providence" collecting). Members, active probably until the political disruptions of 1684 (when the Massachusetts Bay Colony's charter was declared void), directly observed and also collected information about nature in New England that they deemed interesting, significant, or wondrous.[67] The Boston Philosophical Society's collections contributed, according to Cotton Mather, to the *Philosophia Naturalis* of "the Learned *Wolferdus Senguerdius* a Professor at *Leyden*" and also to Cotton Mather's own letters to the Royal Society thirty years later.[68] It is almost certain that they contributed to Increase Mather's wonder collection, the *Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences* (1684).

Over the half-century that followed the Commissioners' call, their reliance on a network of observers and writers, all documenting extraordinary American facts and autonomously spreading tales of them, had achieved overwhelming success and pervaded colonial discourse with evidence of America's exceptional qualities.

In 1681, Increase Mather renewed the Commissioners' call, initiating not an entirely new network, but a second push within the existing collecting structure. This second call, however, emerged from different political origins. After the colonial minister

[66] As John Eliot did when he wrote the Revs. Brookes and Baxter about Mary Dyer's monster baby, or as the Rev. John Clayton did when he wrote Robert Boyle about strange sparks emanating from Mrs. Susanna Sewall's dresses. Letter from Rev. John Clayton to Sir Robert Boyle (with enclosure), 23 June 1684, in Edmund Berkeley and Dorothy Smith Berkeley, eds., *The Reverend John Clayton, a Parson with a Scientific Mind* (Charlottesville, VA: Virginia Historical Society by University Press of Virginia, 1965).

[67] Scholars know very little about this group. The standard account of it remains that of Otho T. Beall, Jr., "Cotton Mather's Early 'Curiosa Americana,'" 360-72.

[68] Beall, Jr., "Cotton Mather's Early 'Curiosa Americana,'" 362.

John Davenport's death early in the year 1670, Mather, sorting through his old friend's materials, had found a manuscript that contained a program for collecting wonders—a "design" as Mather called it. It was not Davenport's own. The manuscript's authorship remains a mystery, but it was likely drawn from a project initiated by Matthew Poole, an English Protestant minister interested in compiling wonder collections.[69] It had come across the Atlantic to Davenport from someone who was also unknown, but whom Mather (and several later historians have) supposed was Samuel Hartlilb, Fellow of the Royal Society. Hartlib particularly wished colonists to collect a wide range of natural "facts" from the American Colonies. As historian Walter Woodward has argued, he had

> expand[ed] on the Baconian program, added trades, manufactures and commerce to the subjects to be encompassed within natural histories. As the categories expanded, the concept of the documented natural history came to be synonymous with the concept of 'systematic accounts – carefully observed compilations of useful information, accurately compiled and distributed.[70]

Based on this manuscript and its "rules," Mather issued another call for the collecting of wondrous information. He did so first in 1677 in a sermon, *A Discourse Concerning the Danger of Apostasy*, printed in 1679. By 1681, Mather presented the idea to a group of ministers gathered in Boston, and gave them a set of proposals for conducting such a collection. The task eventually fell to Mather to compile the book that would come from

[69] Michael P. Winship provides the best attempt at tracing this manuscript's source. See *Seers of God*, 60-64.

[70] Woodward, "Prospero's America," 348-49.

the collection efforts of this group. A great deal of his information, however, came to him through the collection network that had been set in place in 1643.

As we saw from Lowthorp's abridged edition of the *Philosophical Transactions*, the content of such natural history writings could range widely (including wondrous subjects that modern-day scientists would consider fantastical) so long as the appropriate discursive *method*—the "discourse of fact," in Shapiro's term—was followed.[71] Mather thus found little difficulty merging reports gathered decades earlier into the new "design." Nevertheless, the motivations behind Hartlib's interest in colonial fact collections were different than those driving the call issued by the Commissioners for the United Colonies, though both were equally political. They grew out of a larger fact collection project underway at the Royal Society, one which joined royal imperial ambitions with philosophers' voracious desire to obtain and centralize natural knowledge in London.

Early in his reign, before the Royal Society had been officially formed, Charles II directed natural philosophers in London to begin collecting natural information about England's empire—including America—amidst their other researches. "We have thought fit," he proclaimed to the Council for Foreign Plantations, "to drawe these our distant dominions and the several interests and governments thereof into a nearer prospect and consultation . . . they now being a numerous people whose plentiful trade and commerce verie much employees and increseth the navigacon and expens the manufactures of our

[71] According to Michael P. Winship, "the pressure of this [rhetorical] mode was such that Newton once faked the details of an experiment to bring it in line with expectations." Winship, *Seers of God*, 179 n. 36.

other dominions."[72] To accomplish this goal, he commissioned the Council, according to Woodward, "to institute aggressive policies aimed at intelligence-gathering and establishing uniform government." In 1661 a committee was formed to consider "questions to be inquired of in the remotest part of the world." [73]

Following Charles's instructions, Royal Society correspondents specifically sought "informers" from within the English colonies to report back on American nature and profile expanding colonial societies, in order to facilitate greater metropolitan control over the colonies. Oldenburg in particular sought out John Winthrop, Jr. as a natural historian whose high rank in colonial politics as governor of Connecticut made him a particularly useful informant—a role that Winthrop, Jr. attempted to sidestep.[74] Winthrop, Jr.'s natural history writings were, at Oldenburg's and other's behests, supposed to focus on a broad range of subjects including colonial settlement patterns, navigational information for America's rivers and harbors, colonial agricultural projects, community organizations, and potential sites for mining valuable minerals. To know the tricks of navigating Atlantic waters and American coasts, the location of the colonies' settlements, their prosperity, governance, and relationships with other towns and colonies, the natural resources with the most potential value in English or international markets and all of the colonists with special skills or training—all of these "facts" would give England the tools for exercising greater control of the colonies. Such knowledge would enable the crown to

[72] "His Majesty's Commission for a Councill for Foreign Plantations," John Romeyn Brodhead et al., eds., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New-York: Procured in Holland, England, and France* (Albany 1853) III 32-34.

[73] Woodward, "Prospero's America," 328.

[74] Woodward, "Prospero's America," 330.

navigate—literally and metaphorically—its way through America's turbulent waters without depending on the colonists, whose interests already diverged from Charles's in many ways. "How happy it would be," Oldenburg concluded at the end of a long list of inquiries to Winthrop, Jr.,

> if there were an Union of all our English Colonies for free communications wth mutuall assistances: taking in the Bermudas and other Isles, wch the English inhabite, they cannot be lesse than a million of people. But I am told, to my grief, yt for want of due care of them (wch would fixe and setle ym in convenient habitations) vast numbers of ye English are become as wild as ye Savages, and yt they destroy all accomodations wherever they come, and so remove from place to place as disorderly as ye wild Tartars.[75]

Hartlib's call for natural histories of the colonies was thus motivated by what historian James Jacobs has called the King's and the Royal Society's shared visions of "science, trade, empire, and reformation."[76] That the Society's commitment to collecting "intelligence" on America predates its actual existence highlights how the formation of natural history collections emerged within the framework and alongside the goals of empire. It also reveals the widely differing functions to which different fact-collection projects were devoted. While Mather's compilation ultimately focused on the *extra*ordinary qualities of American colonists and American nature, Hartlib and company sought information that would enable the crown to eliminate New England's unique

[75] Oldenburg to Winthrop, c. 1 March 1668/9, *The Correspondence of Henry Oldenburg*, V: 425.

[76] J. R. Jacob, *Robert Boyle and the English Revolution*, 154.

social features and bring it into closer *conformity* with metropolitan goals. Either way, the two groups' mutual interests in colonial "fact" reports created a wide space for speech by ordinary colonists about their strange and wonderful American experiences.

Finally, in addition to the United Colonies and King Charles II, the Royal Society, of course, had its own, *philosophical* reasons for establishing fact-collecting networks, and it ultimately played the most influential role in eliciting colonial wonder writings about American nature and in granting cultural authority to such reports.

The key influence on the Society's establishment of collection networks was Francis Bacon. In 1620, Francis Bacon's *Novum Organum* had laid out a plan for English natural philosophy directed towards the collection of new information about the natural world to replace the false "idols" of past, unfounded notions. Such a collection would not bear philosophical fruit until it was broad enough to provide adequate grounds for philosophers to induct from the particulars to more general conclusions. That broad base required a field of information-gathering much broader than England. Historian of science Steven Shapin has remarked that "it is difficult to imagine what early modern natural history or natural philosophy would look like without that component contributed by travellers, navigators, merchant-traders, soldiers, and adventurers."[77] Daniel Carey goes further by arguing that travellers' interest in the weird and wondrous significantly *caused* early modern philosophy to organize itself eclectically: "The criterion of inclusion [in a traveller's collection] was largely one of novelty and strangeness . . . [and] the unplanned character of travel, and its capacity to yield diverse and unexpected objects for

[77] Shapin, *A Social History of Truth: Civility and Science in Seventeenth-Century England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 245.

consideration, helps to explain the strikingly miscellaneous quality of much natural philosophy. . . ."[78] Collecting from the widest range of sources (including narrative sources drafted by ordinary individuals with no connection to any natural philosophical society in the broadest range of locales was key to the Royal Society's attempt to become a centralized site for amassing "facts" about the natural world.

While the reports we are about to examine may seem so strange as to be uninterpretable—stranger even than the sea providence narratives, for these "fact" reports are presented in isolation from one another, as discrete data—their emergence from these three overlapping projects helps explain why they were written in the first place and what significance they might have held in their own day. The United Colonies sought marvelous representations of the colonies to counter political difficulties that only grew more complex as the century progressed. Charles II sought to better control the American colonies via intimate knowledge of them. And the Royal Society sought to reject scholastic philosophy and base its knowledge instead on first-hand experiences, even if those experiences had to reach them in the form of narrative reports by unknown sources. The networks that were established to collect such reports drew on ordinary farmers, housewives, and merchants as well as colonial leaders and their correspondents in London. And the America they talked about was, indeed, marvelous.

[78] Carey, "Compiling Nature's History," 279.

Monstra: Reading America's Wondrous Facts

In the previous section, I have tried to show how writings about strange natural phenomena not only formed a fundamental component of early American popular and learned discourse, but did so as a result of concerted, long-running, transcolonial efforts to gather such discourse for purposes of colonial political self-representations, empire, and natural philosophy. In this section, I turn from the collection *process* to its *products*, focusing on a) wonder histories from the colonists' first generation of settlers; b) the letters of John Winthrop, Jr. to the Royal Society in London; c) the reports of Increase Mather and the Boston Philosophical Society published in the *Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences*; and d) Cotton Mather's "Curiosa Americana" letters to the Royal Society. The texts themselves prove to be, in the end, irreducible to any agenda. They evoke amazement and puzzlement more than they provide information, and because they were formulated as discrete "facts," their very structure resists being easily impressed into any broader interpretive scheme. In the end, they leave the reader with an array of vivid images and quick flashes of action—tiny, brilliant icons of life in an American nature unimaginable to most Europeans. At the same time, they remain comprehensible—indeed, oddly familiar. Though these snippets of the bizarre portrayed America as a truly "new" world, they did so by relying on old European wonder publishing traditions (which themselves emphasized the imagist qualities of their reports by incorporating fantastical woodcuts into their imprints), fast-growing English "fact" discourse, and well-established Protestant providence writing strategies.

1654-1669: Admirable Showers and Caterpillar Plagues

The earliest American reports of natural wonders appeared in two published histories of New England—Edward Johnson's *Wonder-Working Providence of Sions Saviour in New England* (1654) and Nathaniel Morton's *New-England's Memoriall* (1669).[79] The books illustrate how natural wonders such as floods, earthquakes, strange illnesses, or unusual creatures were used by first-generation colonists to portray the colonies largely according to the old logic of prodigies and providences—as signs of divine approval or judgment. Lacking the sophistication and precision of later reports, these books nevertheless marshaled such events into service as key evidence in frankly polemical narratives of the colony's founding and progress.

Edward Johnson's text, the first published "history" of New England, hyperbolically celebrates colonial "souldiers of Christ Jesus"[80] and their sore but magnificent trials in America's "howling wilderness." He repeatedly reports unusual natural phenomena: the inexplicable increase in agricultural productivity over the colonies' first years, the strange but useful mortality of the area's Indians upon the settlers' first arrival, and the incomprehensible proliferation of cod, to name a few. Preferring broad strokes to details, Johnson paints his history not with the specifics of his own experiences but according to the archetypal experiences of the ancient Israelites. Not surprisingly, thus, he almost completely neglects the more "singular," or "heteroclite" facts sought by Bacon. Mary Dyer, Anne Hutchinson, and their "monster" babies receive no mention in Johnson's book. Although he notes a few "freak" occurrences such as the

[79] For an overview of early American historiography, see Friedman, "Writing the Wonders."

[80] Johnson, *Wonder-Working Providence,* 190.

earthquake of 1638,[81] he rarely mentions other individual physical curiosities, such as unusual plants or animals, experiences of lightning or thunder, or unusual illnesses suffered by individuals. For the most part, his wonders evidence themselves in God's overarching orchestration of the colonists' affairs, rather than in any strange natural phenomena.

"Here againe the admirable Providence of the Lord is to be noted," remarks Johnson in a typical example,

> That whereas the Country is naturally subject to drought, even to the withering of their summers Fruits, the Lord was pleased, during these yeares of scarcity, to blesse that small quantity of Land they planted with seasonable showers, and that many times to the great admiration of the Heathen.[82]

Such "admirable"—to be wondered at—rescue from starvation functions for Johnson in much the same way that Gibbons' shipwreck worked for John Winthrop: it provides a kind of empirical evidence that God has saved the colony and thus that God supports England's and New England's mission in America. Johnson's concluding words in the text, even as they acknowledge the colonists' failures and their leaders' deaths, make this imperial propaganda clear:

> The Lords taking away by death many of his most eminent servants from us, shewes, that either the Lord will raise up another people to himself to do his work, or raise us up by his Rod to a more eager pursuit of his work,

[81] Johnson, *Wonder-Working Providence,* 131.

[82] Johnson, *Wonder-Working Providence,* 58.

> even the planting of his Churches the world throughout. The Lord converts and calls forth of their graves men to fight his battels against the enemies of his truth.[83]

By conveying "the passages of Gods providence toward this wandering Race of Jaacobites," Johnson legitimates the colonies by portraying God's furtherance of their projects.[84]

By 1669, however, New England's next historian, Nathaniel Morton, has changed tactics, focusing extensively on specific unusual phenomena, especially hurricanes, earthquakes, comets and apparitions in the sky, as well as lightning, thunder, and plagues of insects or disease. At least, that is what he did when he ran out of existing manuscripts to plagiarize. Scholars generally agree that all of the substantial social history contained in Morton's work was cribbed, sometimes verbatim, from William Bradford, with additional material borrowed from Edward Winslow. The two had been Plymouth Colony's famous early governors and had left detailed manuscript histories.[85] But Morton, a second-generation colonist, outlived these first-generation writers. Their manuscripts had stopped well before Morton sat down to compose his *Memoriall*. Thus, Morton had to supply material for the intervening years. His book takes a fascinating turn when his sources run out.

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[83] Johnson, *Wonder-Working Providence,* 223.

[84] Johnson, *Wonder-Working Providence,* 196.

[85] Morton himself acknowledges his borrowings. "The greatest part of my intelligence hath been borrowed from my much honoured Uncle, Mr. William Bradford, and such manuscripts as he left in his Study, from the year 1620, unto 1646 . . . Certain Diurnals of the honored Mr. Edward Winslow, have also afforded me good light and help" ("Epistle Dedicatory").

At that point, around the year 1650, Morton's history begins to record only two subjects: a) the deaths of the founders, especially leading clergy and magistrates; and b) natural wonders. Accordingly, the final 70 pages of Morton's 200-page book frame New England's history in a way that differs significantly from the perspective of his source manuscripts: these latter pages bewail a lost generation of settler-heroes and anticipate dire consequences accompanying the rise of the second (and now more fully "American") generation. Reporting the founders' deaths, Morton inserts short hagiographies and epideictic poems, retrospectively characterizing New England's first generation in terms of classical saints' lives. As these leaders continue to die, the rising of the second generation is marked by a series of devastating natural disasters and wonders.

The year 1649, for example, saw the first death of a major founder—Thomas Shepard—accompanied by the onset of a massive transcolonial caterpillar infestation. In 1651, 1652, and 1653, respectively, Morton recorded the deaths of a pre-eminent magistrate (William Thomas), of New England's most celebrated preacher (John Cotton), and of the "principal Founder and Pillar" of the Massachusetts Colony who was also "sundry times Governour and Deputy Governour of that Jurisdiction" (Thomas Dudley).[86] In 1665 Edward Winslow, former governor of Plymouth Colony, died; in 1656, Captain Miles Standish died; and in 1657, William Bradford, long-time governor of Plymouth, died. All other discussions of colonial affairs cease. Alongside these deaths, the wonders increased. In 1657, the colonists suffer a devastating and fatal shipwreck. The entry for 1658 reports a "very great Earthquake in *New-England,"* the deaths of two

[86] Morton, *New-England's Memoriall,* 139.

more leaders—Ralph Partridge and William Paddy—and a report of a man's freak death by "Thunder and Lightning." In 1660, the wonders gain momentum, as thunder and lightning storms, earthquakes, comets, whirlwinds, drought, smallpox, apparitions in the heavens, and the "smit[ing]" of crops pummel American settlers.[87] With the founders' deaths, America seems to be reverting to the "howling Wilderness" early colonists insisted they had "improved." Morton uses such shocking evidence of reversion to draft his own kind of jeremiad directed towards an internal colonial audience in need of ongoing reform.

Johnson's and Morton's texts, thus, both depend heavily on wonders but use them to support different political arguments about the colonies. For Johnson, whose book was published in London, these wonder reports provided evidence of God's preservation of the group, as the early sea providence narratives had done. Johnson redacted all colonial history into a seamless and clearly purposeful narrative of religious progress. Morton's history, on the other hand, appeared only in colonial Cambridge and looked to wonders as potentially ominous signs about the colonies' future. Yet these early texts are, ultimately, more alike than different when compared with the writings about natural wonders that would emerge in the late 1660s. Both Johnson and Morton weave an array of wondrous reports into a unified, chronologically ordered historical narrative told in the voice of a single narrator. They do not emphasize their stories' origins in individual's eye-witness testimony or present them as discrete natural "facts," nor do they withhold religious interpretations of their stories. In the second half of the seventeenth century, that formal

[87] Morton, *New-England's Memoriall,* 177.

presentation would change, and with it would change the overall representation of the American colonies and American nature.

While the United Colonies' 1646 call—and in general, the early modern notion that wonders could serve as political validation of one's project—helped produce these examples of first generation New England wonder writings, the Royal Society and King Charles elicited the second round of "curious" reports. Although Charles and the Royal Society sought such reports for metropolitan, not colonial, ends, they did manage to find colonists willing—indeed, eager—to report to them. The most important of these was John Winthrop, Jr. (son of the Massachusetts Bay's long-time governor, John Winthrop) who became governor of Connecticut Colony in 1657 and was made the first colonial member of the Royal Society in 1662.[88] Nevertheless, rather than sending the Royal Society the kind of information it had requested from its Atlantic correspondents—broad surveys that would enable the crown to consolidate its control over colonial possessions—Winthrop, Jr. eventually adopted the tactic of writing about odds and ends of American curiosities and wonders. Indeed, he actually gave his correspondents America's strangest products, sending over box after box of unusual American objects with accompanying letters, some of which were published in the *Philosophical Transactions*. Stellar fish, feathered flies and flying fish, an earless hog, silk-like grass

[88] There were, of course, other, non-colonial Englishmen in the Atlantic reporting back to the Royal Society on a regular basis, men such as Richard Norwood, John Josselyn, and John Clayton. But the first and most connected colonial natural philosopher of these early "fact" collectors was Winthrop, Jr. He was not only a New Englander but also a native-born colonist deeply involved in the fortunes of the colony at all levels—as a colonist himself, as the son of an influential founding colonist, and eventually, as the governor of Connecticut Colony.

that produced its own down, miniature oak trees and hummingbird nests complete with eggs, cranberries, rattlesnakes, and horseshoe crabs: apart from one extensive description of "the culture of maize," Winthrop's reports during the late 1660s to his death (1675) were generally about such amazing things as "swarms of strange insects."

Why would Winthrop send such "curiosities" rather than writing about tides, ports, American waterways, mines (or potential mines), or the other kinds of natural history his Royal Society correspondents repeatedly demanded? According to Winthrop's recent historical biographer, Walter Woodward, Winthrop was savvy enough to recognize that providing England with extensive information about the colonies' natural resources and infrastructure would set the colonies at a distinct advantage in their attempts to maintain autonomy. When, in 1664, ships arrived from England containing 500 soldiers, 1000 small arms, and Royal Commissioners with directions to bring New Englanders to "an entire submission and obedience to our Government," including submission under royal governors and militia commanders, Winthrop realized that his Royal Society contacts supported consolidation of the colonies under a royal governor. Woodward ultimately explains Winthrop's shipments of wondrous curiosities as a subversive strategy to deny Charles II and the Royal Society the opportunity to gain better control of New England.[89]

While helpful in setting Winthrop Jr.'s Royal Society connection in context, Woodward's argument fails to explain why Winthrop, Jr. chose to send the Royal Society "curiosa." Other evasion strategies might have worked at least as well. Why not provide

[89] Woodward, "Prospero's America," 355-365.

short and partial responses to their requests or draw out the process for years? By describing unusual and curious material and sending along the actual physical objects, Winthrop, Jr. was not merely pursuing an evasive, negative strategy. Rather, such a tactic pursued a positive argument, one that used these "rarities" and "curiosities" to politically effective ends.

1669-1675: Feathered Flies and Flying Fish

> "Your noble friends here, My Ld Brereton, Mr Boyle, Sir Robert Moray etc. returne their affectionat services to you, and continue wth me their earnest request, that you would not delay to put in writing what you know of ye constitution and productions etc. of New England. . . . you will pardon this importunity to him . . . yt is somewhat impatient of all delays in matters of present utility."
>
> —Henry Oldenburg to John Winthrop, Jr., 1671/2

> "It is a fly wth feathers, or something like feathers on the wings. I cannot remember that I have seene an other of the like: there is also in that box an other small box wherin are some round bullets and other pieces of earth or clay of several formes, and small shells, all wch were taken from the inward parts of an hill, wch was this last summer removed miraculously out of its place (the bottom being turned uppermost)."
>
> —John Winthrop, Jr. to Henry Oldenburg, 1670

Winthrop, Jr.'s correspondence with the Royal Society began to focus on America's wonders with several letters in 1664, 1665, and 1669 about "blazing stars"—comets.[90] His adoption of rarities and wonders as his *primary* subjects began in his letter

[90] During these years, he also sent them some of his ideas about navigation, mercury-based medicines, and medicinal roots found in New England. Woodward, "Prospero's America," 375-76.

of 4 October 1669, addressed to Henry Oldenburg. "I know not, whether I may recommend some of the productions of this Wilderness as rarities or novelties, but they are such as the place affords," John Winthrop, Jr. writes in the first line of this first *Philosophical Transactions* report. The unattractive, unimportant "Wilderness" affords no more than "such," he implies with this act of standard humility. And yet, such a place *does* afford "rarities" and "novelties"—as exotic, unknown lands are supposed to do.[91] Indeed, according to Baconian natural science, "rarities" and "novelties" played an extremely important role in the "advancement of learning." Winthrop, Jr.'s opening, self-deprecating gambit, thus, sets him up as merely a "Wilderness" man but one purveying nothing less than the rare and marvelous. For example, he continues, "There are, amongst the rest, 2. or 3. smal Oaks, which though so slender and low (as you may see, if they come safe) have yet Acorns and cups upon them, so that it may be truly said, that there is a Country, where Hoggs are so tall, that they eat acorns upon standing growing Oakes." These oaks are real, as he proves by providing samples of them in an accompanying box. And yet, he can write about them as writers have often written about fabulous lands. His comment mocks the exaggerated marvels of travel writings while it squarely places his "Wilderness" within their domain and makes use of their appeal. His is a foreign country full of plants, animals, and phenomena fragrant and rich, shocking and much more than ordinary.[92]

[91] According to Mary Campbell, medieval and renaissance travel literatures often reduced foreign lands to nothing *more* than repositories of rarities and wonders which played no role in the universe beyond providing grist for the contemplation of western readers.

[92] John Winthrop, Jr., "An Extract of a Letter, Written by John Winthrop Esq; Governour of Connecticut in New England, to the Publisher, Concerning Some Natural Curiosities of Those Parts, Especially a Very

It is worth enumerating the "rarities" discussed in this letter. They encompassed a wide range of objects whose only common quality was their strangeness (to English men and women). They included: unusually small ("dwarfe") oak trees, which Winthrop suggested might be "signes" of minerals in the soil; "girdles of the Indian mony, the white they call wampameage, the black suckalog, they call also both sorts Peage" as well as other "strange" native crafts, such as "a small paile made of the barke of birch or some such like tree, wth a small dish or poreanger of the like, and a traye made of the roote of a tree, these are put in only to shew the maner of their [natives'] family impliments." He also includes a "small square box in wch there is only one stone, wch is full of little holes like hony combe, in every of wch holes was a little living creature like a worme, it is taken from under ye Seawater at an Iland called fishers Iland;" a "strang kind of fish wch was taken by a fisherman;" "a fish wch is full of prickles wch they call a seahedghog;" "a small flying fish;" "heads of a vegetable we call silke grass wch are full of a kind of downe like cotton wooll;" pieces of the "barke of a tre wch growes at Novia Scotia, and (I heare) in more easterly parts of N England, upon wch barke there are little bunches or knobs, within wch there is a kind of liquid matter like turpentine, wch will run out if that bunch be cutt & opened;" "eares of Indian corne . . . of a speciall kind differing from the ordinary corne;" a stone of "limestone;" and finally, "the head of a deare wch seemeth nor an ordinary head; It was brought far out of the country by some Indians."[93]

Strange and Very Curiously Contrived Fish, Sent for the Repository of the R. Society," *Philosophical Transactions* 5 (1670): 1151.

[93] Winthrop, *Correspondence of Henry Oldenburg*, VI: 257.

These tidbits of American nature did not correspond with the kinds of facts Oldenburg had requested, and they would do nothing to help Charles consolidate royal control over the colonies. But their provocative strangeness proved fascinating enough to draw the Royal Society's attention away, at least temporarily, from its other requests. On March 26, 1670, Oldenburg penned an enthusiastic letter to John Winthrop, Jr., indicating his receipt of "ye American Curiosities" which he had presented to the Society on Winthrop, Jr.'s behalf. Indeed, the items were received with such interest, writes Oldenburg, that "His Majty himselfe, hearing of some of ye rarer things, would see ym, and accordingly the Extraordinary Fish, the dwarf-oaks, ye gummy fragrant Barke wth knobbs, ye silken podds, ye baggs wth litle shells in them etc. were carried to Whitehall, where the King saw them with no common satisfaction, expressing his desire in particular, to have yt Stellar fish engraven and printed."[94] In turn, Oldenburg urged Winthrop, Jr. to send more information about several of the items. Although he again asked Winthrop, Jr. to compose "a faithfull and ample Naturall History of New England . . . especially of Minerals," such a pragmatic, profit-oriented project did not generate the philosophical enthusiasm that dwarf trees and starry fish did.

Over the next several years, Winthrop would extend without fundamentally altering this strategy of providing natural wonders instead of utilitarian surveys. By sending more and more shipments and descriptions of wonders, he was able to accrete a mass of American "facts"—representations in miniature of American nature—for the Royal Society's store of knowledge. But these "facts" did not add up to the kind of

[94] Winthrop, *Correspondence of Henry Oldenburg*, VI: 596.

comprehensive "accompt" of the colonies sought by Society and Charles. Winthrop, Jr. seems to have slyly understood an inherent problem with Baconian induction that English philosophers had not yet recognized: without formulating and testing hypotheses, one could collect facts *ad infinitem* without ever discovering the general laws that governed them. Whether or not he fully recognized this methodological flaw, he used it to full advantage, providing the Society with more and more strange facts that, in the end, did not advance the Society's understanding of America in any usable ways. In a letter dated 26 August 1670, Winthrop, Jr. described another shipment of rarities (including, among other things, two stuffed rattlesnakes, a weed supposed to cure those bitten by snakes; and a "small stone like chrystall wch An Indian [from whom I had it] affirmed fell wth thunder & they call them thunderstones").[95] In a letter dated 11 October 1670, he again describes more rarities, including a horseshoe crab, a hummingbird's nest, and a fly with feathers. These items, again, were shipped along in accompanying boxes.[96] Another letter of this same date informs Lord Brereton of a hill turned "miraculously" upside down. Yet a later letter, dated September 1671, discusses more rarities, including poison wood. Through his son Wait Still Winthrop, Winthrop, Jr. sent still another shipment with an accompanying letter dated 17 October 1671, including an Indian bow and arrows, the sword of a fish, and a "horn back" fish. The last known letter of rarities was dated 28 November, 1671, just a few years before Winthrop, Jr.'s death in 1676.

[95] Winthrop, Jr., *Correspondence of Henry Oldenburg*, VII: 142-44. No evidence exists that Oldenburg ever received this shipment.

[96] Winthrop, Jr., *Correspondence of Henry Oldenburg*, VII: 201-03.

Although this bombardment of glittery American nature effectively distracted the Royal Society, Winthrop, Jr.'s shipments and letters did more than simply evade their requests for a comprehensive survey of colonial American possessions. Indeed, through careful rhetorical maneuvering, Winthrop, Jr. used them to actively resist England's attempts at reducing American colonies to mere "possessions," resources that could be exploited at the crown's whim for England's "matters of present utility."

In the first place, the Royal Society would have *had* to accept these items as valuable contributions to English natural philosophy. As we have seen, unusual "curiosities" dominated the pages of the *Philosophical Transactions*. Such reports were also common in the *Ephemeridum Medico-Physicarum Germanicarum.*[97] Though side-stepping Oldenburg's requests, Winthrop was still trafficking in what was widely acknowledged as significant natural historical research. Nevertheless, Winthrop's reports adopt the posture that Royal Society members wished their American correspondent to take: that of a field reporter whose primary value lay in his direct access to the subject of interest, rather than in any special intellectual expertise or educational qualifications. Winthrop, Jr.'s curiosity letters, indeed, do not show off his learnedness or suggest that the colonies have any learned societies or institutions of equal value to England's. Rather, through the rhetoric of his letters, Winthrop, Jr. throws his weight into one asset he has that they value: his first-hand access to American nature. Underneath all of their requests

[97] This early journal (fully titled as *Miscellanea curiosa medico-physica Academiae Naturae Curiosorum sive Ephemeridum medico-physicarum germanicarum curiosarum*) was published in Breslau by the *Academia Naturae Curiosorum* as "the world's very first natural science and medicine journal," according to a recent history published by the academy. See "The German Academy of Natural Scientists Leopoldina: History, Structure, Tasks" (Halle, 2003), 20.

to Winthrop, Jr. lay the Society members' frustration with their own lack of access to valuable information about these new territories. In this way, he presents himself humbly as being no more expert than a sailor traveling the Atlantic or, even yet, an ordinary American colonial who works the soil (from which type, Winthrop Jr., frequently noted, he had acquired his "rarities."). While devoid of social status, guild affiliation, political position, or intellectual training, such ordinary individuals like Winthrop, Jr. still possessed a quality that men like Robert Boyle, Samuel Hartlib, and Henry Oldenburg lacked: direct access to and experience in American nature.

This posture was elaborated by his shipments of actual objects to Oldenburg. By sending American nature directly to the Royal Society, philosophers in England could almost investigate it themselves without requiring American intermediaries. The ultimate effect, however, seems to have been the opposite. His shipments of "curiosa" vividly drove home the fact that America was chock full of portions of the book of nature that were important, and yet completely unavailable to English philosophers except through the assistance of a man like Winthrop, Jr. The two-fold response of Oldenburg, Charles II, and the Royal Society to these shipments would seem to confirm this point: first they expressed fascination and delight, then they made clear their desire for more information and *more* rarities. In response to these letters, Oldenburg would send Winthrop, Jr. a variety of follow-up requests for additional information for investigations that he and his companions could not pursue without Winthrop, Jr.'s continued aid.[98]

[98] See, for example, Oldenburg's request for more information about "yt Stellar fish." Oldenburg to Winthrop, 26 March 1670, *Correspondence of Henry Oldenburg,* VI: 594-95.

Perhaps more fundamentally, Winthrop's choice of wondrous objects vividly demonstrated that America contained natural features of which Englishmen knew nothing. The puzzles Winthrop, Jr. sent to the Society were not problems that English philosophers had already begun to tackle; these "rarities" had not been enumerated on the Society's extensive lists of phenomena about which they wished to learn more. These were problems about which they were entirely ignorant. Winthrop's quiet but colorful windows into America, conveyed through both letters and boxes of objects, would have suggested that England's most prestigious intellectual organization was fundamentally crippled, not by its lack of skill, but by its inability to carry out the very first task Bacon had insisted upon—to accurately survey the natural world.[99]

The Royal Society was already troubled by this problem to some degree, as is clear in their extensive attempts to gather reports from those traveling abroad. As Daniel Carey has shown, these efforts led English natural philosophers to accept travel narratives by non-guild members as sources of natural information that carried authority equal to or greater than direct observations made by the members of their own guild. But by 1696, Royal Society fellow John Woodward wanted more. Winthrop's shipments had given him and others an appetite for America that could not be sated by mere narratives. He began asking sailors and other travelers to send back material objects for direct inspection by Royal Society members.[100] He wanted no fewer than 6-8 specimens of everything they

[99] On the potential for foreign rarities to *set* the direction for Englishmen's philosophical inquiries (rather than those being set *by* the Royal Society), see Daniel Carey, "Compiling Nature's History."

[100] John Woodward, *Brief Instructions for Making Observations in all Parts of the World: As Also for Collecting, Preserving, and Sending over Natural Things Being an Attempt to settle an Universal Correspondence for the Advancement of Knowledg both Natural and Civil* (London, 1696). Woodward's

found. Like Noah packing his boat to start a whole new world, Woodward seemed to want to import to England a mini-America so that English philosophers there would no longer need to rely on colonists at all. Such large-scale collection of material objects only makes sense if Woodward was committed to centralizing scientific authority in a particular locale—London, for example—and denying that authority to the "curious" in other regions—Catholic France, say, or dissenting New England.

Woodward's impractical but repeated requests—eventually urged upon Cotton Mather and productive of Mather's own "curiosa" letters—suggest that Winthrop's argument was effective. Winthrop, Jr. had been able to demonstrate—*monstrare*—that he held an advantage over men like Woodward, so far from America's resources, and that America's value lay in the revelations it might make possible about God's book of nature—not merely its ability to serve as a dumping ground for England's problems or a source of wealth for England's economy. "I have now had," wrote Winthrop, Jr. to Oldenburg in 1668, "by your friendly remembrance of an *exile in a remote Wildernesse*, some part of that happinesse of wch those who are *neere yt fountaine* doe continually and abundantly partake in those learned & curious speculations, informatious discourses, & experiments, wch streame abroad to the world from the Royall Society."[101] Yet through his letters, Winthrop, Jr. showed that the stream, in reality, moved in the opposite direction. The "exile in a remote Wildernesse" was himself the one "neere yt fountaine" of unknown nature. The underlying message in his letters was that London could never

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name did not appear on the title page. It was presented as having been "Drawn up at the Request of a Person of Honour and presented to the Royal Society."

[101] Winthrop, *Oldenburg Correspondence* V: 156, emphasis mine.

itself be such a "fountaine," only a distribution center redacting and republishing information pouring in from the empire's margins, sites whose spectacular nature would remain wholly beyond its control.

In a letter to Winthrop, Jr., Oldenburg had once suggested that New Englanders' pursuit of natural inquiries would become a means by which they —and England—might gain control of the land: "I doubt not," he wrote, "but the savage Indians themselves, when they shall see the Christians addicted, as to piety and vertue, so to all sorts of ingenuities, pleasing Experiments, usefull Inventions and Practices, will thereby insensibly and ye more cheerefully subject themselves to ym."[102] The natives, of course, were unimpressed by the colonists' scanty knowledge of American nature. It was Englishmen like Oldenburg himself, instead, who would come to admire American wonders and colonists' acquaintance with them, and who would "submit themselves" to the authority of colonists' "curious" writings about "all sorts" of American "ingenuities."

The possible uses of "curious" American nature appeared most clearly not in Winthrop's reports or the colony's early wonder histories, however, but in the wonder anthology compiled by Increase Mather approximately 10 years after Winthrop, Jr.'s correspondence ceased. In this work, the providence-oriented and philosophy-oriented fact-collection projects outlined previously merged for the first time, fusing providence and natural history rhetoric into an encyclopedic representation of the American colonies and their exceptional identity.

[102] Oldenburg, *Correspondence of Henry Oldenburg,* VI: 595.

1681-84: Deaf-Mutes and Balls of Fire

Rhetorically formulated as an American natural history,[103] Mather's anthology of wonders, the *Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences* (1684), shared similarities with John Winthrop, Jr.'s letters and *Philosophical Transaction* reports, but the material he included differed in one significant way: most of his reports directly involved New Englanders' bodies. Whereas Winthrop primarily focused on strange flora and fauna, Mather's reports featured human physical experiences. Thus one lengthy section narrated the tales of colonists who were struck by "Thunder and Lightning" and another recounted colonists' experience of deafness, dumbness, and stones growing in their bodies. Mather also included numerous narratives about unusual diseases and recoveries, colonists' physical trials during captivity, and demonic possessions (always manifested as bodily torments). These reports, while still written according to a philosophical rhetoric, differed from Winthrop Jr.'s by drawing intimate connections between America's wonders and the American colonists themselves. Since the most wondrous occurrences directly involved colonists' bodies and, by extension, their lives, the lives of their family members, and their communities, Mather's collection extends the exceptionalism argued by Winthrop. In this later text, it is not merely America as a geo-

[103] Certainly the work archives, as my arguments in other chapters show, *several* major genres of early American popular discourse about wonders: reports of unusual recoveries from injury; theological discussions; shipwreck narratives; reports of tempests, hurricanes, whirlwinds, and floods; captivity narratives; judgment narratives; and narratives about witchcraft and apparitions. The variety of genres within Mather's text, however, can obscure their shared rhetorical formulation as natural history. Throughout the book, Mather's editing not only introduces the rhetorical tactics of the emergent natural history and "discourses of fact," but repeatedly compares New England incidents to phenomena reported in English, French, and German-language philosophical journals, cites the writings of well-known natural philosophers and natural historians, and explicitly couples narratives about unusual natural events in New England with "*philosophical meditations"* on the possible natural causes of such phenomena.

political *site* that proves important to English and continental natural philosophy. Indeed, the *people* of America, and particularly, New Englanders, bear extraordinary marks of the new world on their bodies and minds and in their communities.

A clear example of this focus appears in two chapters on "remarkables about Thunder and Lightning" in New England. Mather claims to provide reports of *all* the known "remarkable" instances of New England lightning and thunder in specific empirical detail. "In July 1654. A Man whose Name was *Partridge* (esteemed a very godly person) at *Salisbury* in *New-England* was killed with Thunder and Lightning, his House being first set on fire thereby, and himself with others endeavouring the quenching of it, by a second crack of Thunder with Lightning (he being at the door of his house) was struck dead, and never spake more," begins one account. "On the 28 of *April A. D.* 1664. A Company of the Neighbours being met together at the House of *Henry Condliss* in *North-Hampton* in *New-England*, to spend a few hours in Christian Conferences, and in Prayer; there hapned a Storm of Thunder and Rain." Their story, too, proves interesting enough to relate in gory detail. And so again in July of 1665, "There were terrible cracks of Thunder. An House in *Boston* was struck by it, and the Dishes therein melted as they stood on the Shelves, but no other hurt done in the Town. Only Captain Davenport (a Worthy Man, and one that had in the *Pequot* War, ventured his life, and did great service for the Countrey) then residing in the Castle where he commanded; having that day wrought himself weary, and thinking to refresh himself with sleep, was killed with Lightning, as he lay upon his Bed asleep." Mather proceeds to collect together and

elaborate upon another 14 tales of "remarkable" lightning and thunder in New England.[104]

The decision to focus on lightning tales had several interesting consequences. These natural "rarities" were *events*, not objects. While Winthrop documented America's thunderstorms by shipping to Oldenburg a "thunder stone" that purportedly fell from a thunder clap, Mather could only narrate to his readers that a "black Cloud flying very low" had produced a "Fire-ball" that killed John Philips in 1658. Even John Winthrop's careful packing could not ship a fireball across the Atlantic. Lightning was also intangible in other ways. Many of the tales Mather used were remarkable precisely because the lightning had left no discernable marks on its victims. In 1664, when Matthew Cole "was struck stone dead as he was leaning over a Table, and joyning with the rest in Prayer," he "did not stir nor groan after he was smitten, but continued standing as before, bearing upon the Table," and "there was no visible impression on his body or clothes, only the sole of one of his Shoes was rent from the upper Leather."[105] Although shoes were rent and, more frequently, pewter dishes melted, lightning's effects were often strangely invisible, though no less deadly or irreversible. When Richard Goldsmith was killed by a "smart Clap of Thunder" and a "Ball of Fire as big as the Bullet of a great Gun" accompanied by smoke with a "strong smell as of Brimstone," his body, too, appeared inexplicably unmarked. "As soon as the Smoke was gone," the narrator notes, "some in the room endeavoured to hold him up, but found him dead; also the Dog that lay under the Chair was found stone dead, but not the least hurt done to the Chair [in which

[104] Mather, *Essay*, 72-98.

[105] Mather, *Essay*, 76.

Goldsmith had been seated]. All that could be perceived by the Man, was, that the hair of his head near one of his Ears was a little singed."[106] Such natural wonders left no empirical evidence. Like the wondrous operations of witches and devils, lightning produced physical effects by invisible means and thereby produced no "facts" that could speak for themselves. These shocking "matters of fact" required narrators.

As a result, while Winthrop, Jr. had been able to entice and impress the Royal Society with physical artifacts and his own descriptions of them, Mather relied on ordinary individual's first-person narratives. Narratives, of course, were the form in which most colonists articulated the providences they had been collecting over the course of the century. Mather's focus on narratable events, thus, enabled him to draw extensively on the stories that had issued from the United Colonies Commissioners' 1646 call. That call, motivated by a desire to portray the good character and development of the colonists themselves (rather than their environment) had urged colonists to focus less on *objects* and more on wondrous *occurrences* and *personal experiences*. (Even Dyer's "monster" baby was originally valued as a event rather than as an artifact, since it was perceived to have been born in order to ostracize Antinomians, not as a natural fact interesting in its own right.) Mather thus had access to a massive half-century-old archive of reports and stories, urban legends and published anecdotes, diaries, commonplace notes, and letters, all of which featured wondrous natural events but placed them in the context of an individual's or community's identity development.

[106] Mather, *Essay*, 81-82.

Relying on old providence tales did not undermine the credibility of the text Mather ultimately produced. As previously noted, narrative evidence by individuals not trained in natural history was nevertheless given full credit by most natural philosophers.[107] Daniel Carey notes, for example, that Robert Boyle was ready to renounce his own experiments on ambergris (he had determined that it originated in the "scum or excrement of the whale") because his results were contradicted by a travelers' narrative. The narrative alleged that the traveler had seen a sea tree exuding the substance. The traveler's eye-witness testimony, in Boyle's view, counted for more than Boyle's own training or past experience with the subject matter, because it was not produced by a "philosopher to broach a *Paradox*, or serve an *Hypothesis,"* but had come from a "Merchant or Factor for his Superiors, to give them an account of matter of fact" in an "authentick *Journal.*"[108] Like Boyle, Mather's reports privileged the position of ordinary laborers at work in the natural world over that of philosophers like himself. The thunder and lightning stories, for example, almost exclusively featured ordinary colonists, including women. Apart from Captain Davenport, whom the narrator describes as "a Worthy Man, and one that had in the *Pequot* War, ventured his life, and did great service for the Countrey," the people who experienced these natural phenomena had been working in fields, "going with a loaden Cart," attending church or visiting neighbors, bringing their ketches in from the sea, or holding their infants in their arms, when struck by American marvels.

[107] Carey, "Compiling Nature's History," 285-92; Shapiro, *Culture of Fact*, 47-52.

[108] Carey, "Compiling Nature's History," 287.

In this way, the *Essay* is not only able to feature narratives that subtly emphasize the unique providential identity of colonial communities, but is also able to suggest that even common Americans—not just elite travelers to America—know America's natural wonders more intimately than the most widely learned English philosophers. Indeed, the knowledge that they gained often corrected philosophers' views. For example, although "it has been an old Opinion . . . that Men asleep are never smitten with Lightning," the case of Captain Davenport proved otherwise. He was "killed with Lightning, as he lay upon his Bed asleep."[109] Even more wonderful, Mather suggests, was what was observed by a group of sailors on board a ship struck by lightning.

> The strangest thing of all . . . [was that] when night came, observing the Stars, they [the sailors] perceived that their Compasses were changed. As for the Compass in the Biddikil, the North point was turned clear South. There were two other Compasses unhung in the Locker, in the Cabbin. In one of which the North point stood South, like that in the Biddikil; as for the other, the North point stood West. So that they Sailed by a Needle whose Polarity was quite changed. The Seamen were at first puzled how to work their Vessel right . . . but after a little use, it was easie to them. Thus did they Sail a thousand Leagues.

When Mather focuses on particularly unusual instances of lightning, instances that in some cases directly contradicted extant theories about the workings of lightning, he suggests that these commoners knew from personal experience what metropolitan

[109] Mather, *Essay*, 76.

philosophers did not. And because these events were not preserved in physical form to be re-examined by others at later dates, the commoners' narrative testimonies would remain the *only* authorities on the phenomena.

In spite of his deference to the authority of ordinary colonists' experiences, Mather spares no pains to present his reports according to the most credible formula possible. Even as Governor Winthrop had done years earlier with his report of the monster baby, Mather employs all the available rhetorical means to make his narratives as memorable and credible as possible. He cites key philosophers whom he has read to indicate that—no mere country bumpkin—he has kept abreast of the relevant literature.[110] He also makes clear that he has managed, despite his location, to stay abreast of the major scientific journals emerging in England and the continent. He cites at length "the *Virtuosi* of *France* in their Philosophical Conferences," the English "Philosophical transactions" and the "*Authors Ephemeridum Medico-Physicarum Germanicarum*." Furthermore, he demonstrates knowledge of natural wonders across a breathtaking range of locales, citing relevant cases in Bergen, Meckelen ("a principal City in *Brabant*"), Ireland, France, Spain, "Guiny", the Azores, Rome, Germany, England, "Brasilia," Africa, Bohemia, Saxony, and, of course, New England. Thus, while advancing the importance of colonial

[110] For example, regarding his comments on sympathies and antipathies in natural objects, he reminds his reader that "there is no Philosopher but speaketh of this. Some have published whole Treatises (both profitable and pleasant) upon this Argument; In special *Gilbert, Ward, Cabeus, Kepler*, and of late *Kircherus.*" Furthermore, D. Brown," has written "rational" "arguings" about the compass needle, while "Mr. Seller" has made observations about the earth being a "great *Magnet."* "The truly Noble and Honourable *Robert Boyle* Esq., many of whose excellent Observations and experiments have been advantagious, not only to the *English* Nation but to the Learned World" has written about load-stones and magnets "in his Book of the Usefulness of Experimental Natural Philosophy"which Mather cites at length. "Mr. William Clark in his natural History of Nitre observes" important ideas as well, which Mather cites. And of course, he can situate all of these writers within the leading authorities of Scripture, from the "Jewish Rabbins" and "the Psalmist" to Acosta, Beard, and Clarke (the latter two being the famous editors of providence and wonder narrative collections.) Mather, *Essay*, 103, 105, 104, 106-07, 111.

first-hand experience, he makes sure to frame his narratives within the still-legitimizing references to learned authorities. And while emphasizing the unique qualities of New England, he makes sure to situate it in the broader transatlantic and transnational world. That is, while willing to advance an argument for New England's exceptionalism, that claimed identity could only exist in a comparative context. America, and especially New England, is extraordinary not simply because it *is* (as Americans today seem to feel), but because its nature and people are more brilliant, godly, and out of the ordinary in comparison to Spain's, England's, the Netherlands', or France's.[111]

Because of this overarching emphasis on New England's extra-ordinary qualities, some scholars have been confused by Mather's inclusion of well-known wonders from other countries. "It may be," he writes after he has told all his New England lightning and thunder stories, "it will be grateful to the Reader, for me here to commemorate some parallel Instances, which have lately hapned in other parts of the World."[112] These repeated inclusions as well as the overall organization of Mather's collection, I believe, suggest that he had begun gathering, enyclopedically, all the known discourse about his subjects. The attempt was structurally identical to the Royal Society's attempts to gather into their archives all known reports on natural phenomena, or John Woodward's effort to collect physical samples of America's every feature for the Society's stores. Far from demonstrating Mather's colonial backwardness, his impulse towards comprehensiveness evidenced his willingness to go one step further than Winthrop, Jr. and begin to centralize America's knowledge in Boston, rather than shipping it off to London. Reversing the

[111] Mather, *Essay*, 115, 117, 93, 93, 97.

[112] Mather, *Essay*, 93.

traditional relationship, he uses English and continental philosophers to supply wonders to his own encyclopedic record of natural "facts," drawing on *them* to supplement *his* and the Boston Philosophical Society's project. At least on paper, Mather indicates that he, at least, is fully prepared not only to argue that New Enland *should* be an important site for natural philosophical inquiry, but to actually make it so.

The publication statistics of this book indicate that, to a significant degree, Mather succeeded at incorporating colonists and their bodies into the vivid "fact" icons of America that would fascinate Europeans. The *Essay* was reprinted three times (once in London, and twice in Boston) during the first year of its release. Another London edition followed in 1687. The text would be reprinted twice in the nineteenth century.[113] Its unforgettable, miniature narratives show the colonists electrifyingly marked and transformed by their experiences in American nature. Such representations may have helped the colonists amidst the crises that faced them in the year the book came out – 1684—when the colony's charter was revoked, less than 8 years after the conclusion of the publicly damaging King Philip's War.

1712-14: Antediluvian Fossils and American Methuselahs

Many of the wondrous natural facts collected by New Englanders in the wake of the Commissioners' 1646 call eventually made their way into the hands of Cotton Mather, who not only used them in sermons, but also shipped them off to the Royal

[113] James Levernier, ed., Introduction to *An Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences* (1684; Delmar, NY: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 1977), v.

Society as "Curiosa Americana" in the early eighteenth century.[114] In 1712, Mather sent his first series of letters to Royal Society members John Woodward and Richard Wallis. By this late date, one might expect the brilliance of colonial wonders to be waning in the shadow of the rising enlightenment philosophy, but Mather's marvels not only expand the catalog of American natural wonders, but ultimately offer the most aggressively exceptionalist representations of colonial America to date. In these reports, he suggests not merely that America has *more* wonders than other places in the world, but that its wonders are more *important*. Far from scaling back these short narratives and portraits, Mather occupies a productive middle ground between the discourse of the new science and the new religious currents that would become driving forces in the eighteenth century.

The 1712-14 "Curiosa Americana" letters (the first in numerous sets that Mather would send to London over the 1710s and 20s), like the *Philosophical Transactions* themselves, covered a range of subjects. It is worth enumerating them here to gain a sense of the breadth and nature of the American "facts" Mather conveyed. The first letter, directed to John Woodward, a geologist and physician and the society's Provincial

[114] Very few scholars know anything about them, since only a few fragments have ever been published or reprinted. Portions of the manuscript letters or draughts of them are currently held by the Massachusetts Historical Society, American Antiquarian Society, and in the Letter-Book of the Royal Society. George Lyman Kittredge catalogued the letters in "Cotton Mather's Scientific Communications to the Royal Society," *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 26 (1916): 18-57. Greatly shortened excerpts of some of the letters can be found in Kenneth Silverman, *Selected Letters of Cotton Mather* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1971). The few valuable discussions of these letters are David Levin, "Giants in the Earth: Science and the Occult in Cotton Mather's Letters to the Royal Society," *William and Mary Quarterly* 3rd ser. 45 (1988): 751-770, which contains a careful transcription of Mather's first letter; Michael P. Winship, *Seers of God*, 93-110; and Otho T. Beall, Jr., "Cotton Mather's Early 'Curiosa Americana' and the Boston Philosophical Society of 1683," *William and Mary Quarterly* 3rd ser. 18 (1961): 360-372. None set Cotton Mather's letters within the broader wonder writing tradition that I am outlining here.

Secretary, pitched another book by Mather and also reported on some giant bones discovered outside New York. His second letter described numerous unique plants of America, while the third letter discussed birds of America. The fourth letter examined what he called "antipathies," such as a woman's inability to watch anyone trim fingernails with a knife; powerful "sympathies," such as when a man travails with his wife; and the "power of imagination" to breed stones in the body or to impress an image upon an unborn child. Mather's fifth letter covered various "monstrous births," including, as we have seen, Mary Dyer's. The sixth discussed medicines or medical remedies revealed to individuals through dreams. The seventh recounted various cases of individuals who received wounds that ought to have killed them, but from which these individuals remarkably recovered. With the eighth letter, Mather discusses Indians' division of time and beliefs about constellations. A ninth conveys Mather's own observations of rainbows and mock suns (parhelii) in America. In the tenth, Mather describes several colonists who have witnessed apparitions of the dead. The eleventh discusses another kind of "American monster": the rattlesnake. Mather's twelfth letter recounts information about the violent thunder, lightning, and hail storms common in America, concentrating on individuals' experiences of these events. Finally, in a fascinating final letter, Mather describes the unusual longevity of American colonists' lives and their bizarre fruitfulness in childbearing (one woman, for example, gave birth to 23 children).

This list of topics shared a great deal with what was by now a well-established tradition of colonial writing about America's natural wonders. By 1712, however, the

political and social challenges facing the colonists had changed in several significant ways. Most notable were the royal governors to whom New England had become subjected in 1692, when Increase Mather returned to Boston with Massachusetts' new charter. The 1684 revocation of the colony's original charter had ended its almost total autonomy from royal authority. Matters worsened with the royal appointment in 1702 of Joseph Dudley as governor of Massachusetts Bay. Although American-born and descended from a prior Massachusetts Bay governor, Dudley was seen as an opportunist seeking personal advancement over communitarian goals. He argued in London for his appointment as governor on the basis of his prior cooperation with the immensely unpopular first royal governor, Edmund Andros, his intent to support the Church of England and the King's Acts of Trade, and his commitment to corral New England into a "strict dependence upon the Crown and Government of England.'"[115] Dudley wished not only to bring the colony under close metropolitan political control but also to introduce metropolitan cultural values, including High Church Anglicanism, adherence to a social hierarchy demarcated by conspicuous displays of dress and lifestyle, and a system of quid pro quo in which social and political advancements were bought and distributed as favors. Rather than valuing the colony's "out of the ordinary" qualities, Dudley exhorted his countrymen to erase these distinctions. "Let us be English-men!" he urged.[116]

Dudley's rise led to a number of consequences, among them the eventual marginalization of dissenting religious leaders like the Mathers. Mather's biographer, Kenneth Silverman, has noted how Increase Mather was edged out of the Harvard

[115] Kenneth Silverman, *The Life and Times of Cotton Mather* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), 204.

[116] Silverman, *Life and Times of Cotton Mather*, 209.

presidency and Cotton Mather out of political influence during these years, and how their weakened positions invited rebellion against them by parishioners and other ordinary colonists. Even as Cotton Mather's international intellectual reputation rose (he was awarded an honorary doctorate of divinity by the University of Glasgow in 1710 and the title "Fellow of the Royal Society" in 1713), his ability—as well as that of colonial dissenting Protestants in general—to direct the course of New England society waned.

These altered circumstances were not unique to Boston. They were a part of a gradual shift in policy during the eighteenth century by metropolitan governments attempting to gain greater control over colonial possessions across the Americas—in Barbados, Brazil, Peru, Mexico, and New England—whose trade increasingly supplied and maintained European governments.[117] To complicate matters, alongside this century-long tightening of metropolitan oversight came a parallel development particularly threatening to communities founded by radical Protestant reformers: the resurgence of Catholicism worldwide.

Although the eighteenth century is often termed the "Age of Enlightenment" or the "Age of Reason," argues historian Derek Beales, we might as well call it "the Age of Religion" or "The Christian Century" because "there is a good case that it was not until the middle of the *eighteenth* century that the Counter-Reformation reached its apogee, in Germany and elsewhere."[118] Over the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, historians estimate that fifty-one German princes converted back from Protestantism to

[117] Pagden, *Lords of All the World*; and Mancke, "Empire and State."

[118] Derek Beales, "Religion and Culture," *The Eighteenth Century: Europe 1688-1815*, ed. T. C. W. Blanning (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 133, 136.

Catholicism, including the Elector of Saxony, the predecessor of whom had been one of the first German princes to protect Luther. In 1685, Louis XIV revoked the Edict of Nantes, declaring that all of France would be officially Catholic. The archbishopric of Salzburg expelled all Protestants in 1731. Catholic missionary efforts expanded and lay brotherhoods and confraternities increased by millions. Along with the re-emergence of Catholicism as the dominant religion in much of Europe came the re-designation of certain lands as more holy than others, as Catholics undertook pilgrimages to holy sites of past miracles. Though America might still be a land of wonders, it would have to compete with sites such as the Mary shrine at Marizell, Austria, to which 188,000 to 373,000 people would pilgrimage annually between 1725 and 1753.[119]

Where Protestantism did make gains, it did so outside the theologically-oriented Calvinist tradition. German Pietism, even Cotton Mather recognized, not only attracted the period's best Protestant minds, but had truly begun taking up the mission of fulfilling the Reformation by extending its insights from the theological realm to the social realm. Pietists sought not only to achieve correct doctrine but to abolish slavery, create socially just communities, end poverty, and curtail exploitative commercial practices. Although American colonials like Mather could embrace the insights and activities of the Pietists (Mather even published his most influential book, *Bonifacius* [1710], in an effort to contribute to the movement), doing so further undermined any attempts on their part to

[119] Beales, "Religion and Culture," 137.

maintain that New England stood at the vanguard of world reform religiously and socially.[120]

In this context, Mather's curiosities appear in a particular light, as reassertions not merely of America's unique natural features but also of its religious significance and the fundamentally (even physically) distinctive identity of its people. Mather's topoi expanded the established American wonder canon to reintroduce monsters (which Increase Mather had dropped) and add a variety of new categories: dreams and visions (in anticipation of the enlarged role such experiences would play in the eighteenth century), marvelous characteristics of American colonists' bodies, and in a particularly astonishing turn, fossils of legendary Biblical creatures. Each of these categories introduces intimate connections between the colonists, the spiritual world, and American nature, connections nicely demonstrated by Mather's very first letter to John Woodward.

In it, Mather responds to Woodward's request for information about "subterraneous" American nature. (Woodward studied minerals.) Mather approaches the request by posing a question:

> QUAESTION. -- Concerning the Dayes before the FLOOD, the Glorious Historian [Moses] has told us, *There were giants on the Earth, in those Dayes.* Could any undoubted Ruines and Remains of those GIANTS be found under the *Earth*, among the other *Subterraneous Curiosities* in o[ur] *Dayes*, it would be an Illustrious Confirmation of the *Mosaic History*, and an admirable obturation on the mouth of Atheism!

[120] Silverman, *Life and Times of Cotton Mather,* 231.

> ANSWER -- Then lett the Inquisitive part of Mankind, know that the *Bones* of those who were certainly Some of the *Antedeluvian GIANTS,* have been found *under the Earth*, in these Later Ages.

One hardly needs to ask where these giants were found. They were, of course, buried deep in America. "The *men*, who were able to *have turned the world upside down came hither also*" Mather intones dramatically.[121] He goes on to describe the discovery in 1705 of what appeared to be a gigantic tooth and thighbone, found in New York, of "One above Seventy Foot High."[122] The tooth, apparently, weighed "four pounds and three quarters, The Top of it, as Sound and White, as a Tooth can be; but the *Root* is much Decay'd. Yet one of the Fangs of it, holds Half a pint of Liquor!" He describes the "Thigh Bone" as being seventeen feet long. "There is since," this discovery, Mather adds, "another *Tooth* taken up, in the Same place; which is a *Fore*-Tooth, Broad and Flatt, and is as Broad as a mans Four Fingers. They dug up Several Trees, in the same place, of great Bigness."[123]

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[121] "Giants in the Earth," 762. For this letter (on the giants) alone, I have relied on the careful edition supplied by David Levin which he based on the Royal Society copy of Mather's letter held in London. References to all other letters are based on transcriptions I made from original manuscripts, copies, or microfilms held at the Massachusetts Historical Society..

[122] Levin, "Giants in the Earth," 764.

[123] Levin, "Giants in the Earth," 767. Peter Harrison contextualizes the importance of Mather's argument. "Animals of the Americas," he argues, "were typically regarded as inferior versions of the more perfect originals of the first world. The continent itself was variously a land which had wholly escaped the Deluge, a sodden continent only recently recovered from its inundation, or the New Atlantis of Plato's *Timaeus*. Its human occupants were fancifully though to be descendants of the last tribes of Israel, naked innocents who had escaped the fate of Noah's wicked generation, or degenerate savages who had wandered far from the site of Noah's disembarkation. Chancellor Bacon reckoned the inhabitants of America to be 'a young people', a 'simple and savage people, (not like Noah and his sons, which was the chief family of the earth)'. Donne was to speak of 'That unripe side of the earth, the heavy clime / that gives us man up now, like Adam's time / before he ate'." Harrison, *The Bible, Protestantism, and the Rise of Natural Science,* 90.

Mather's discussion of the giant bones initially positions itself as merely adding an additional tidbit of information to European stores. "America, too, will come in," he writes, to supplement the knowledge of European authors.[124] But by emphasizing the significance of these bones as evidence that antediluvian Giants lived in America, the entire weight of the letter is thrown into proving a somewhat different claim, one that does not position America as providing minor supplementation to the great tradition of English and European natural philosophy but places America at the center of those traditions. America, according to this logic, is not just another site on the expanding European map. Rather, it stands at the center of Biblical history. North America, Mather concludes firmly, was a site where God's creatures lived before the flood. Such a discovery is a mystery, to be sure, he acknowledges, but one that pulls America out of its third-class status at the margins of European philosophy—indeed, the margins of English empire—and right back to center stage in the middle of God's world map, a site of powerful connections to the Biblical world, the true world of wonders. Mather informs his reader that he is sitting on an "Amassment" of such "Treasures," and he wishes that English presses would print them and thus "return to print something else besides your *Politicks,* & serve to better purposes than to vent the *Ill Humours* of Your Nation."[125] While England wastes its time on petty disputes, in America, the history of the world emerges from the soil as Biblical time connects to the present in larger-than-life ways.

Like the presence of giants, the unnaturally large presence of monsters in New England (Mather discusses five cases in his monster letter), provides not only interesting

[124] Levin, "Giants in the Earth," 766.

[125] Levin, "Giants in the Earth," 759.

natural knowledge but also indicates a high degree of divine presence in the region. Writing about Dyer's story and the other cases in Latin, Mather makes use of the dual meaning of the Latin verb "monstro / monstrare," which means "to show, to point out, to make known, to demonstrate." In its noun form, thus, "monstrum" primarily signifies a "sign, portent," or "wonder;" and only secondarily indicates the English notion of "monster" as an abnormal living creature. Using this dual coding, the essay at once appears to document philosophically monsters who have lived in New England while also suggesting for them the significance of a good old-fashioned divine sign. Mather is too good a philosopher to actually declare that these deformed children were God's direct judgments on sinful mothers, or to claim that their primary natural importance lies in some kind of message as divine signs. He never glosses the stories or provides a moral for them. Yet his decision to switch into Latin for this one letter (he only uses Latin sporadically in the other letters, generally when directly quoting a Latin treatise) suggests his willingness to play up the American natural world as offering more immediate access to God's truths for a transnational audience. Whether or not his audience found such a suggestion persuasive, he again makes a case that America offered both a lode of natural knowledge about key questions in philosophy and also the kind of religious connections to the divine that Catholicism was reasserting in old Europe.

Mather's spectacular America does not just offer closer *access* to such totemic artifacts or iconic creatures. It brings forth wonders viscerally in the dreams and bodies of American colonists. Despite Dudley's imperative "Let us be English-men!," Mather's colonists are presented as having already been constitutionally altered by their time in

this spiritually saturated world. In his 1712-14 letters alone, Mather introduces his readers to American giants, bodily sympathies and antipathies, the force of the imagination on the body, monstrous births, remedies revealed in dreams, and bodies curing themselves of wounds. In one particularly revealing letter, he offers examples of how Americans tend to live longer than Europeans and bear more children. Like its antediluvian giants, America's human inhabitants are uncannily Biblical. Though not quite a Methuselah, "My Neighbour Boniface Burton, was countd an Hundred & Twelve." More importantly for the future of the colonies (especially in an era that erroneously believed populations across Europe to be in rapid decline),[126] "It is no rare thing for an Aged Gentlewoman here to see many more than an hundred of her offspring, before she leaves the World. Indeed . . . One Morey had no less than twenty three children, by one Husband; whereof Nineteen lived unto mens & womens estate . . . ."[127] Far from degenerating its inhabitants, America was making them into human wonders extraordinary not for freakish aberrations in their physique, but for their superior health.

For those who were not so healthy, dreams might reveal to them the medicines that would heal them. Mather's lengthy story of the dying Lydia Ingram, who was cured by a remedy revealed to her when a "venerable gentleman" repeatedly appeared in her dreams, showed that American colonists were even more closely connected to the "Invisible World." Mather accounted this visitor to be an angel, and suggested that the

[126] T. C. W. Blanning, "Introduction: the Beneficiaries and Casualties of Expansion," *The Eighteenth Century: Europe 1688-1815*, ed. T. C. W. Blanning (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 1-2.

[127] Cotton Mather, Letter to Richard Waller, 29 November 1712, Frederick Lewis Gay Transcripts at the Massachusetts Historical Society.

angels were frequent visitors to New England. Ingram's dream concluded when the gentleman

> then went unto the Door, & there turning about he said with a more cheerful and pleased countenance; Take it, and Give God all the Glory; Give God all the Glory; Farewell! And so he went out. She accordingly followed his Advice, & found perfect Releef. She went on taking ye Remedy twice or Thrice a day, and God blessed it so, that she Recovered, and quickly came abroad, & has been since married successively to two husbands, & been a mother of children, and is to this day alive, which is fourteen years after ye occurrences that have been related.

Though modern scholars might assume that such a letter would receive little regard from Mather's Royal Society audience, Mather had cause to believe that he was standing on relatively solid ground in presenting it as a "natural history." "I am writing," he continued,

> to one who perfectly comes into the sentiments which Incomparable [Robert] Boyl expressed in those agreeable Terms, 'If it were allow'd me to envy creatures so much above us, as are the caelestial spirits, I should much more envy that Angels charitable employment, who at sett times diffused an healing vertue thro' the troubled waters of Bethesda."

Boyle, Mather reminds Woodward, believed in angels and their healing powers. This set of letters procured for Mather his membership in the Royal Society.[128]

Though employing long-established wonder topics, the narratives conveyed by the "Curiosa" letters focus on a distinct group of people (New Englanders), a distinct region (America), and the world of spirit and Biblical history, forging connections between the three. These emphases make the letters partly a referendum on what is special about the New England colonists, without making that topic an explicit subject of the letters. Set forth according to the authoritative methods of the new natural philosophy, Mather's engrossing stories suggest that the New England colonists are still exceptional, just as they had always claimed. And yet now it is not their beliefs or ideals that make them special, but their experiences in this exceptional place—a place that, even nearly 100 years after the founding of the Plymouth settlement, still seemed to provide the colonists with plenty of life-changing experiences rare in "older" parts of the world such as London, Halle (the site of the theologically famed University of Halle and the Pietist movement), or Mariazell, the Catholic pilgrimage site in Austria.

Strange but True: American Exceptionalism in Early Modern Philosophy

Like the other wonder narratives I discuss, this chapter's wondrous natural "facts" created astounding representations of New England over the course of a historical period fraught with political peril for New Englanders: the 1660 Restoration and subsequent

[128] Cotton Mather to Richard Waller, 22 November 1712, Frederick Lewis Gay transcripts at the Massachusetts Historical Society.

pressures on dissenting Protestants, the Licensing Act of 1662 that limited access to the press for radical reformers, the crown's attempts in 1664 to revoke colonial charters, King Philip's War of 1675-76, the 1684 loss of colonial charters, the 1688 Glorious Revolution and subsequent Act of Tolerance. Over all of these specific challenges lay the more fundamental problem of colonial identity. Defining America and Americans as special in the divine scheme became, over the course of this tempestuous first century of colonization, an imperative.

Unlike the subjects of other chapters, however, this chapter's wondrous narratives offer themselves explicitly as "evidence" about "matters of fact" in America. They were able to play a particularly prominent trans-national role because they served double-duty as, at once, evidence for New England's providential community history and also as natural facts for the Royal Society's database of global nature. These ordinary colonists' narratives were formulated by learned editors according to the period's most authoritative discursive strategies for representing the truth about a subject in question, and these strategies enabled the stories to serve as credible representations of New England. Tracing the rich history of interest in reports of American natural wonders—from Mary Dyer's monster baby to Goodwife Morey's 23 healthy children—helps explain where these narratives came from, the form they eventually took, and their considerable cultural power. Gathering together a wide range of exquisite "facts" portraying New England at its most colorful, and then forming them into a composite mosaic, colonial editors crafted a representation of Americans as exceptional people in an exceptional place—not mere and marginal servants of English empire.

In 1692, "America" was still a recognizable metaphor for unknown worlds. That year, Joseph Glanvill, Fellow of the Royal Society, would write that "The Land of Spirit" [is a] "kind of America" [standing] "on the Map of the humane Science like unknown tracts."[129] Into the void of that unknown, any number of representations of America competed to define these "unknown" but highly contested "tracts." American Methuselahs, feathered flies, monster babies, great balls of fire, and the bones of antediluvian giants: such reports, already popular to English and continental audiences through fabulous travel literatures, gained credibility through their association with and publication as the new science, and for many individuals, these stories and reports would have filled that void with brilliant fragments of an astounding new world.

[129] Joseph Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus,* II, 10-12.

Conclusion: "Wonders of the Invisible World": Representing Witchcraft and Possession in the American "Land of Spirit"

After the Revolution

> Thomas Putman's wife had a grievous Fit, in the time of Examination, to the very great Impairing of her strength, and wasting of her spirits, insomuch as she could hardly move hand, or foot, when she was carryed out. Others also were there grievously afflicted, so that there was once such an hideous scrietch and noise, (which I heard as I walked at a little distance from the Meeting house,) as did amaze me, and some that were within told me the whole assembly was struck with consternation, and they were afraid, that those that sate next to them, were under the influence of Witchcraft.
>
> —Deodat Lawson, *A Brief and True Narrative,* 1692

Less than 20 years after the outbreak of King Philip's War, a second flurry of publications swept through Boston and London describing alarming, bloody, and potentially unlawful doings in English America. Within months of the first 1692 Salem Village witchcraft hearings, colonial writers rushed into print careful representations of the preternatural wonders ordinary colonists were experiencing and how the colonsits were handling this onslaught of the "Invisible World."

Deodat Lawson, for example, testified to the reality of the wondrous afflictions. He writes in the opening paragraph of his account that

> On the Nineteenth day of *March* last I went to *Salem* Village . . . and presently after I came into my Lodging, Capt. *Walcut's* Daughter *Mary* came . . . and spake to me; but suddenly after, as she stood by the Door, was bitten, so that she cried out of her Wrist, and looking on it with a

> Candle, we saw apparently the marks of Teeth, both upper and lower set, on each side of her Wrist.[1]

Cotton Mather immediately put a geo-political spin on the affair:

> The *New-Englanders* are a People of God settled in those, which were once the *Devil's* Territories; and it may easily be supposed that the *Devil* was exceedingly disturbed, when he perceived such a People here accomplishing the Promise of old made unto our Blessed Jesus, *That He should have the Utmost parts of the Earth for his Possession,*[2]

he argued in the opening of his 1692 account. Increase Mather and the leading ministers of Boston represented the clergy's wisdom in responding to the situation, showing that they and the judges would be guided by God, who would "direct in the whole management of this Affair; prevent the taking any wrong steps in this dark way; and . . . in particular Bless these faithful Endeavours of his Servant to that end."[3] Though widely different, each publication—as well as a later set of accounts that would appear in 1700-02—addressed both a home audience to guide the affair and a transnational audience to guide public perceptions of New England.

As rhetorical interventions in times of political crises, the witchcraft publications shared obvious characteristics with the political writings about King Philip's War. But

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[1] I have relied on the imprint of Lawson's narrative that appeared in London bound together with Increase Mather's *Cases of Conscience,* compositely entitled *A Further Account of the Tryals of the New-England Witches* (London 1693), 1. Lawson's text originally appeared in Boston as *A Brief and True Narrative of some Remarkable Passages Relating to sundry Persons Afflicted by Witchcraft, at Salem Village Which happened from the Nineteenth of March, to the Fifth of April, 1692* (Boston, 1692).

[2] Cotton Mather, "Enchantments Encountered," *Wonders of the Invisible World* (Boston, 1692), sect. II.

[3] Increase Mather, "Address to the Reader," *Cases of Conscience Concerning evil Spirits Personating Men, Witchcrafts, infallible Proofs of Guilt in such as are accused with that Crime* (Boston, 1693).

they also paralleled the many wonder texts examined in this study. They are filled with what the colonists perceived to be wonders: children in inexplicable fits, apparitions biting and pinching men and women, invisible furry creatures, mysterious diseases, women flying through the air on poles and an ever-present diabolical "Black Man." The texts also present themselves as careful reports of "matters of fact," first-hand observations of physical phenomena attested by credible witnesses, or careful second-hand narratives of others' experiences. Like the previous texts discussed, these tales were also mediated by learned colonial elites—religious or political leaders—who collected and edited ordinary colonists' stories of events which they generally had not witnessed themselves.

By 1692, however, political circumstances in North America were fundamentally unlike those of previous periods. In 1684, the Massachusetts Bay Colony's charter had been revoked, leading to the arrival in 1686 of Sir Edmund Andros, a royally appointed, Anglican governor whom most of the colonists soon learned to hate. As a result of its disenfranchisement, New England was no longer able to define itself; it was henceforth directly controlled, more or less, by the English crown. How much more or less autonomy the colony might have had under an American-side governor, however, remained undetermined. When news reached America in 1689 of William's and Mary's arrival in England and the subsequent "Glorious Revolution" that deposed James II and his newborn Catholic male heir, Governor Andros was jailed. To clarify the situation, all awaited the return of Increase Mather, who had slipped away in 1688 to London in an attempt to regain some charter privileges for the colony. Mather eventually succeeded in

rectifying the colony's situation, obtaining from King William both a charter and an agreeable new governor (William Phips, who had been born in the colonies).

The situation had clearly worn on the colonists. Mather's embassy would be successful, but the process took time and he did not return to Boston with the new charter and new governor until May of 1692. Thus, between 1689 (when news of the revolution had reached Boston and led to Andros' imprisonment) and 1692 (when Mather returned with the new charter and governor), the colonists lacked both a legitimate government and a legal basis for occupying American territory. Even after the establishment of the new government, no one knew anymore what it might mean to be a colonial American or, more importantly, to what degree colonials would themselves be able to define that meaning. In a very real sense, then, the political conjuncture of 1689-92, not England's Glorious Revolution, began the colonial eighteenth century and also a new political era in the American colonies, and it thus stands at a critical turning point in the development of the writing and speaking practices at the heart of this study.

To begin looking forward into the trajectory of wonders after the seventeenth century, therefore, it is necessary briefly to visit the operations of wonder rhetoric at work in Salem, Massachusetts, in 1692-93, operations which exemplify in particularly lucid form the textual functions I have outlined in this study while marking a transition in the function of this rhetoric. Much more so than other wonder writings, the Salem narratives directly affected the lives of men, women, and children who were largely innocent of the crimes for which they were imprisoned, socially discredited, and in far too many cases, hanged. Indeed, more directly than the narratives heretofore examined, the repercussions

of these writings spread even beyond the individuals directly involved. In the voice of a new generation, relating to a problem that seemed entirely internal to the community, the narratives gave shape to the new social constellations of the colony: social relations between men and women, between Europeans and both Africans and Native Americans, and between individuals in differing stations of life. And as a consequence, more than the other wonder writings we have seen, at stake in these texts were not only the lives of American colonists but also the very legitimacy of the colonies themselves and the wondrous discourse they had been using to defend that legitimacy.

Mediating Salem Speech

> I have herein also aimed at the Information and Satisfaction of Good Men in another Country, a thousand Leagues off. . . And I do what I can to have that Country, now, as well as always, in the best Terms with my own.
>
> —Cotton Mather, *Wonders of the Invisible World*, 1693

Not only had the colonies' governments come unhinged between 1689 and 1692, but so too, apparently, had their people, if the possessions at Salem were any gauge. During what has since become perhaps the most notorious episode in early American history, "curious" forces began to afflict Bostonite John Goodwin's four children in the stressful days of 1689 shortly after Increase Mather had departed for London, ultimately leading to the accusation and execution of the Irish laundress Goody Glover. Soon enough, Abigail Williams, Elizabeth Parris, and other girls in Salem Village began

experiencing mysterious fits, too, and before long, Salem Town's and Andover's jails were filled with accused witches.

The theatricality of the events should not blind us to their underlying politics. The chain of events had begun in those uncertain post-Revolution days when New England was, for the first time in its history, governing itself (under the ad-hoc leadership of the octogenarian Simon Bradstreet [Anne Bradstreet's husband]) without a legitimate charter or crown-approved government. Once King William granted New Englanders the privilege of a new charter and the opportunity to proceed under the direction of a governor from among their own people (though now royally appointed, not elected), resolving the inflammatory situation at Salem became critical. Both Increase Mather and the new governor, William Phips, attest that the first order of business upon their return to the colonies was Salem's witches. Phips thus immediately set up the Court of Oyer and Terminer that would bring these jailed witches to trial and, for many, to death. More so than any of the previous wonders we have considered, therefore, the preternatural wonders at Salem became a test of the colony's changing identity, legitimacy, and government. As a result, representing these wonders and their handling by colonial leaders became a particularly crucial task for those interested in legitimizing the colony as a functional social and political unit, capable of self-government.

Few have carefully examined the corpus of *published* Salem writings as such a conscious project of representation, preferring instead to use them as sources of information about the trials. Although scholars, antiquarians, and artists have chewed over Salem more than any other single episode in early American history save the

American Revolution, the vast majority of them have concerned themselves with asking one troubling historical question—"Why did the Salem outbreak happen?"—rather than the question I have been pursuing in this study: "How did public reports of wonders affect New England's public identity?" Pursuing this latter question at Salem requires sidestepping the confusion of the trials themselves to focus on a small set of books by the Reverends Deodat Lawson, Cotton Mather, and Increase Mather published originally in 1692 and 1693.[4]

These three ministers' writings are particularly puzzling because they present an apparent contradiction, articulating two basic positions which seemingly contradict one another. Lawson and Cotton Mather have been roundly denounced for publishing inflammatory narratives granting credibility to witchcraft proceedings. The other rhetorical strain, praised by scholars as the guiding ideal of Increase Mather's text, openly questioned the reliability of the accusers' testimonies (especially when they testified that a given individual was a witch because the "specter" of said person had been seen doing diabolical things). Assuming what has been claimed as a more "modern" view of wonders, this text also questioned the reliability of the "infallible" tests of touch and sight used by the judges. To a modern eye, as a result, the Salem publications evince a public rift in the colonial leadership about how to treat the evidence appearing in the trials. Such a show of dissension would have been a rhetorical failure at least as

[4] For the sake of brevity, I focus here only on the writings appearing during and immediately after the outbreak of witchcraft accusations. Two other texts, by the merchant Robert Calef and the minister John Hale, did not appear until 1700 and 1702, respectively. I intend to incorporate their works into a future, fuller version of the argument that I sketch here.

damaging as the one seen in the King Philip's War publications.[5] And the colonists knew it. Adopting an argument still current today among American leadership under fire, internationally minded leaders like Cotton Mather warned that public dissent was itself a kind of evil: "Tis necessary that we unite in every thing," he urged.[6]

In contrast to the public furor actually on the ground in New England, the texts themselves, I will briefly argue here, elaborately present these two positions as operating not in antagonism but in cooperation. They show that, on the one hand, New England leaders were ready and able to deal with the demonic wonders in their midst and would not "suffer a witch to live," as the Mosaic law had prohibited in Exodus 22:18. On the other hand, they also make clear that these leaders understood how complex eye-witness evidence about invisible activities could be and, in consequence, employed a sophisticated, "charitable" (in Increase Mather's words), and cautious knowledge of evidentiary procedures. Although these writings exerted varying influence at Salem (Increase Mather's helped put a stop to the trials, while Cotton Mather's may have exacerbated public sentiment), in their capacity as representations of the colony for transnational outsiders, the texts worked well as a coordinated trio. They used the occasion of Salem's wonders to advance positive representations of the colony's new government to readers of very different religious and political points of view.

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[5] This argument appeared prominently in both Perry Miller's discussion of the affair as well as Silverman's—both influential. See Perry Miller, *The New England Mind from Colony to Province* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1953), 198-204. The only scholar to refute this view is David Levin, "Did the Mathers Disagree about the Salem Witchcraft Trials?" *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 95 (1985): 19-37.

[6] Cotton Mather, "Enchantments Encountered," *Wonders of the Invisible World*, Sect. VI.

The publishing history reveals part of this operation, outlining a strategic arc of textual arguments for legitimacy. Only a few months after Abigail Williams and Elizabeth Parris began to fall into "fits" (February 1692), Deodat Lawson composed his *Brief and True Narrative of some Remarkable Passages Relating to sundry Persons Afflicted by Witchcraft, at Salem Village Which happened form the Nineteenth of March, to the Fifth of April, 1692, Collected by Deodat Lawson* (Boston, 1692). Later in the year, Cotton Mather begin compiling material for his book, *Wonders of the Invisible World* (Boston, 1692)—a collection which includes: a) a discussion of the overall meaning of the "witch plot" afoot in New England, b) an abstract of authoritative rules for "the discovery of witches," c) a sermon on the devil that he had preached the day before a set of witch executions;[7] and d) transcriptions of some of the most famous Salem trials. The book appeared in Boston in October. Meanwhile, Cotton's father, Increase Mather, had begun a manuscript of his own, which would eventually receive the signed approval of every Boston minister (save Cotton Mather, and the Mathers did not generally endorse one another's books because, they said, of their relation to one another).[8] This latter text was presented to Governor Phips and urged that witches should not be convicted on the grounds of "specter evidence" or trials by look and touch. Capital convictions, rather, required free confessions by the accused or first-hand evidence by two witnesses not afflicted by specters or fits. Increase's work was published as *Cases of Conscience* (1693) and appeared immediately after the publication of Cotton Mather's book.

[7] The text was Revelations 12: 12 :"Wo to the Inhabitants of the Earth, and of the Sea; for the Devil has come down unto you, having great Wrath; because he knoweth, that he hath but a short time."

[8] Increase Mather, "Postcript," *Cases of Conscience*.

Each text, thus, first saw print in the colonies and had a somewhat different focus: an "eyewitness account," a collection of records, and a legal argument. But each was quickly shipped across the Atlantic and reprinted, multiple times, in England. A copy of Cotton Mather's book was immediately sent to the crown with a letter by Governor Phips that defended his own handling of the affair. The new governor, Phips, had in fact commissioned Cotton Mather's book. By December 24, Cotton Mather's *Wonders* had reached the hands of the London publisher John Dunton, who undertook a reprinting. It was in print by the end of December (though imprinted with the date "1693"). Dunton issued an additional, abridged, edition in February of 1693, and reprinted this edition in June. Someone compiled a news-letter (the historian George Lincoln Burr argues that it was a "bookseller's fraud") from Cotton Mather's text and printed that in London, too, in 1693.[9] By far the largest portion of this text's actual audience, then, had never visited Salem and saw only what Cotton Mather provided—again, at the behest of Governor Phips.

Cotton's book and the other texts met an established public appetite for wonders as soon as they appeared, as the preface to Deodat Lawson's narrative makes clear. Lawson's Boston publisher, Benjamin Harris, had savvily presented the text as a "Collection of some Remarkables, in an Affair now upon the Stage, made by a Credible Eye-Witness, [and] now offered unto the Reader, only as a Tast, of more that may follow in Gods Time," suggesting that these reports were simply additional entries in the catalogue of wonders, more of which might be expected from such a spectacular affair.

[9] George Lincoln Burr, ed., *Narratives of the Witchcraft Cases, 1648-1706* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1914), 207

"We suppose," the publisher proceeded, "the Curious will be Entertained with as rare an History as perhaps an Age has had; whereof this Narrative is but a Forerunner." Presented thus as a "rare" and "curious" history of "remarkables," the narrative was marketed to a much broader audience than those merely concerned with local politics. It was marketed to those who thirsted after "wonders."

Not surprisingly, in 1693 Lawson's text was reprinted in London. This edition also included an additional short account, "Further Account of the Tryals of the New-England Witches," which took the story from where Lawson left off to its eventual conclusion. Notably, the edition also included Increase Mather's *Cases of Conscience* and bound the three texts into one volume. Lawson had the whole set published again in 1704 (by which time he was himself living in England), now also united to the sermon he had given in Salem on March 24, 1692 amidst the gathering furor.[10] By this time, the Lawson-Increase Mather publication had become strangely similar in structure to the book Cotton Mather had compiled: it contained now a sermon on witchcraft in New England, extensive philosophical discussions of evidentiary rules, and historical reports of events and examinations. While scholars have claimed that Cotton Mather's structure was arbitrary, the result of a slapped- together composition process,[11] the parallel structures that appear in these two books carry a logic of their own that attest to careful rhetorical maneuvering. Both Cotton Mather's book and this first London edition of Lawson's and Increase Mather's texts physically paired together vivid, sensational narratives about the afflicted girls' and women's torments with cautionary discussion of

[10] Burr, *Narratives of the Witchcraft Cases,* 149.

[11] For example, see Silverman, *Life and Times of Cotton* Mather, 111-19.

how afflicted deponents might be possessed by demons, rather than by witches, and thus offer false (deluded) testimony.

"Fact" narratives formed an important component of each publication. In his narrative, Lawson focuses not on analysis but on "fact" descriptions of the afflicted girls and women in their dramatic "fits" as well as his observations of the judges' initial examinations. The general approach of his narrative is well illustrated by an a ccount of his intervention during the afflictions of Goodwife Putnam, whose invisible tormenter did not wish Lawson to read a passage from the Bible to her:

> After this, she seemed to dispute with the Apparition about a particular Text of Scripture. The Apparition seemed to deny it . . . she said, She was sure there was such a Text; and she would tell it; and then the Shape would be gone, for said she, 'I am sure you cannot stand before that Text!" then she was sorely Afflicted; her mouth drawn on one side, and her body strained for about a minute, and then said . . . "It is the third Chapter of Revelations." . . . I judged I might do it this once for an Experiment. I began to read, and before I had near read through the first verse, she opened her eyes, and was well.[12]

As he does in this passage, Lawson sometimes reports others' words without critically questioning them, and he just as often flatly declares his own first-hand observations of these events as matters of fact. For these sorts of comments, Lawson, like Cotton Mather, who also adopts this style of reportage in his *Wonders of the Invisible World*, have been

[12] Lawson, *Further Account of the Tryals*, 4-5.

often denounced for foolishness at best, and at worst, maliciousness in what seems to us today to be their credulity.

According to the narrative methods we have traced in previous chapters, however, there is nothing unusually credulous about Lawson's or Cotton Mather's writings. Just as the writers about King Philip's war, sea providences, monstrous births, and natural histories did before them, Mather and Lawson follow the established rules for reporting "matters of fact." They record the speech, as carefully as possible, of first-hand witnesses or experiencers of wondrous possessions or witchcraft. They personally attest or gather attestations for the credibility of these witnesses. They "stick to the facts," eschewing or carefully bracketing any interpretation of these events. (Just as Increase Mather had done in his *Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences,* Cotton Mather kept physically separate in his book reports of the trials from his sermon on the devil). Their texts concentrate on providing sharp sensory details, especially images, to impress upon readers: the shrieks of an assembly, a snake sucking a witch-child's finger, bite marks in skin, the small "Black man" offering "red meat and red drink" to young girls, witches teats. They expect such colorful reports to ultimately yield important information about both visible and the invisible worlds. No formal or substantive differences exist between these reports and other wonder writings appearing throughout the century.

The major differences between Lawson's report and Increase Mather's critical *Cases of Conscience,* paired with it, is not credulity versus skepticism but history versus philosophy. As the second component in both the Cotton Mather text and the Lawson-Increase Mather text, this philosophical component provided the means by which readers

could *judge* the "matter of fact" contained in the narrative portion. Rather than a narrative "history," the elder Mather, Increase, offers a logical examination of abstract questions about the devil's capacities, especially the devil's ability to appear in the shape of innocent persons, a deception leading to innocents being mistaken for witches. Based on these deductions, Mather is able to offer firm principles for distinguishing between evidence sufficient to *examine* an accused person and the evidence necessary to *convict* an accused person of witchcraft, a capital crime. While the overall statements of Lawson's and Increase Mather's texts do not disagree, their *form* thus differs to indicate their different rhetorical goals. One describes, the other prescribes; one speaks to the broad community, the other to the band of legal experts.

This duality ultimately constituted itself as a complementary "both/and" representation of the colonial leadership, rather than forming a contradiction. Far from undermining Lawson's report, binding Increase Mather's text to it actually fortified it by placing greater emphasis on the procedural correctness of the trials.[13] This same kind of maneuver (joining sensational "facts" of common evidence to more formal judicial norms) occurs internally within Cotton Mather's *Wonders of the Invisible World*. Mather's citation of orthodox evidentiary procedures, as well as his insistence in various points on prescriptions for the handling of evidence, creates a framework in which the reader can evaluate the procedures of the trials he then describes, which come off flawlessly, even as they provide unforgettable details. Thus, George Burroughs could be

[13] Only one scholar has recognized that Cotton Mather's and Increase Mather's books do not in any explicit way *disagree*. See Levin, "Did the Mathers Disagree?" I would argue more strongly that, indeed, the prescriptions of Increase Mather, far from undermining the representation of the trials provided by Cotton Mather, authorized it as perfect.

portrayed fantastically as a witch of superhuman strength and a murderer of two dead wives whose bloody apparitions returned to haunt the afflicted girls. He frequently blew a trumpet to summon a massive force of witches, "who quickly after the Sound, would come from all Quarters unto the Rendezvous."[14] Such details were permissible in his trial without damning the trials themselves, because Cotton Mather, who edited the account of George Burroughs's trial in his book, made it clear that the evidence against Burroughs included one of the two main types cited by Increase Mather as sufficient for rightful conviction. Increase Mather, also discussing the Burroughs case, would go so far as spell to spell these implications out: "the Judges affirm that they have not Convicted any one meerly on the account of what *Spectres* have said" and, in case that statement did not make his position clear enough, he added that regarding George Burroughs case, "had I been one of his Judges, I could not have acquitted him" for the same reason that his son Cotton had offered: the evidence used, colorful and marvelous as it was, counted as the right kind.[15]

That the trial could be shown to have proceeded without flaw may be the most important result of this textual convergence of descriptive and prescriptive modes. These writings show how even the most controversial wonder experiences could be given textual authority when properly formulated, and this textual authority, in turn, could be used as a tool in the political struggle to represent the legitimacy and competence of the new American government, conveying that colonial scholars were not only discursively competent, but also procedurally skilled.

[14] Cotton Mather, *Wonders of the Invisible World*, 94-104.

[15] Increase Mather, "Postscript," *Cases of Conscience.*

The documents, moreover, apparently did an effective job, notorious as they have become today. The court's proceedings were halted upon the publication of Increase Mather's treatise—a maneuver that enabled the governor to represent himself in a second letter to the crown as judicious and cautious. And yet the leaders of the Salem court did not, apparently, lose cultural authority upon the end of the affair, either. William Stoughton, the most notorious judge of the trials, retained his position as lieutenant governor and was often to become acting governor during the many periods when New England transitioned between royal governors in the years after Phips' death. For all their tumult, the political fallout of Salem's trials seems to have been remarkably minimal. In their effects, the trial reports vindicated all the officials involved and provided textual evidence of a well-functioning colonial justice system, able to cope with the strangest of situations.

Arguably, a second important consequence of this success was the survival of wonder writings as a persuasive discourse. Modern scholars' disdain for sensational narratives about witchcraft and possession—which some have even gone so far as to credit with *causing* the Salem affair—was not shared by the colonists themselves, even in the wake of a horror like Salem. Although the content of wonder stories would change over the course of the eighteenth century—monsters, witches, and rains of blood would go out of fashion in learned circles, while a wide range of shocking, sensual, and visionary spiritual experiences would gain increasing cultural authority—the mediation of ordinary people's wondrous experiences by clerical editors, who published individuals' stories to pursue larger social or political ends, would continue. That is, the

witch trial hysteria had not caused a change of public taste away from such wondrous evidence. There was no "disenchantment" involved, no general renunciation of the judicial norms used at the witch trials in favor of a "reformed" colonial government. The texts are thus not merely evidence of colonial damage control or records of a hysteria that needed to pass. Instead, they reveal a well-functioning discourse of legal legitimation applied to an extreme case. Arguably, some of these same conventions for handling the text of colonial experience and colonial nature would come into play a generation later, when they enabled writers in the Great Awakening to lend authority to their textual representations of other kinds of controversial spiritual wonders.

Rhetorical Literacy and the Politics of Publishing

As I have shown in this study, wonder writings in seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century America took a variety of rhetorical forms. Sea providence narratives, drawing on medieval and renaissance travel writing traditions, were perhaps the oldest, although they must contend for primacy with the judgment narratives (which I discuss in a separate study). Tales of shocking divine "judgments" had played an important role in popular literature as well as international politics since the publication of John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments.* Alongside these two major genres stood several seventeenth-century innovations: captivity narratives (which I omit from this study, since they [alone] have been intensively discussed by others) and natural philosophy reports. And, of course, the genre of wonder writings for which the seventeenth century remains best known is that of demonic possession and witchcraft reports.

These popular narratives were the stories that everyone in colonial America knew, stories that helped unite the colonists in the creation of a collective cultural memory, punctuating community time with colorful, iconic glimpses into life in America. Because so well-known and so often repeated, these narratives and reports provided ready-made, authoritative, yet malleable forms for the expression of new experiences. More broadly, they were able to be crafted into a body of evidence that could ground a vivid public identity for the colonies as a collective, though it is certain that the *published* identity conveyed by these texts differed greatly from the variety of *actual* (or even imagined) identities that increasingly diverse bodies of colonial Americans made for themselves.

Editors of these texts used their position at the margins of the Atlantic world as an asset rather than a handicap. Within the climate of Reform Protestantism, they derived a new kind of textual and real authority from a circumstance that was not unique to America, but which Americans increasingly claimed as part of their exceptional character: the abundance of unusual, and unusually trying, experiences which were to be found in what Cotton Mather variously termed a "squalid, horrid, *American* Desart"[16] and a land of angels. The meaning of these stories thus depended not only on their content and form, but on their attachment to a testator who had directly experienced the phenomena. The rhetorical power of these stories, as well as their popularity and striking images, made them attractive candidates for political use—especially for crafting a public identity for the colonies in times of legitimacy crises. Such an identity was constructed

[16] *Wonders of the Invisible World*, 11.

upon the claim to a unique experience and an understanding of revelation outside that shared by the other significant Protestant nations.

Reading these texts, I have focused primarily on elite-group writers who used wonder narratives to pursue their own political ends. The histories I have sketched show colonial editors recording and modifying, sometimes radically, ordinary people's American wonders, and then publishing them for political ends. Such mediating activities might be seen as an impediment to discovering "the people's stories" of this period.[17] After all, we have no direct access to unadulterated ordinary people's voices when they have all been jumbled up by men like John Winthrop, Cotton Mather, Deodat Lawson, or James Janeway. And yet, I would argue, this problem presents not an obstacle but a starting point for questioning how speech about traumatic, spectacular, often spiritual experiences—as spoken by ordinary people and published by elites—*functioned* in colonial America. By tracing the permutations of colonists' experiential speech across manuscripts and into print (often over multiple publications), analyzing the rhetorical and material forms of these publications, and situating these publishing activities amid the salient social and political contexts of the day, we can begin to ask for what purposes—religious or political—wondrous experiential speech was appropriated and employed.

Ultimately, these studies reveal how formulaic speech and narrative types were tactically adapted by groups at cultural, geographic, or political margins and put to use as unique responses to particular historical challenges. As historicist and rhetorical scholars

[17] Carla Mulford, "The Ineluctability of the Peoples' Stories." *William and Mary Quarterly* 3d ser., 57 (2000): 621-34.

have documented, a community can indeed appropriate inherited, accepted canons of expression, even religious ones, and adapt them to new political and social needs.

American Wonders in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries

The dictions I have traced here are, however, probably preserved most effectively in the context of Reform Protestantism and its cultures. As such, this discourse would find itself under siege from what became mainstream Enlightenment thought in Europe. In certain rhetorical forms, wonders ceased in the eighteenth century. Bacon's "heteroclites" (and the form of empiricism that gave them significance) gave way to the regularities of French science in its Enlightenment forms.[18] Meanwhile, politicians in England had been working for years to discredit the providentialist rhetoric that had proved so politically valuable to dissenting Protestants like Puritans, Quakers, and other radical groups. In many ways they had succeeded by the early eighteenth century.[19] Yet, though the eighteenth century is often associated with the Enlightenment, scholars of European and American cultures—especially those interested in the far-reaching influences of religious cultures—might well consider it, as one recent historian has termed it, the "New Age of Wonders."[20]

Such a naming acknowledges in another way what I have been tracing here: that sophisticated colonial intellectuals increasingly used extraordinary experiences—

[18] Park and Daston, "Unnatural Conceptions," 51-54.

[19] Winship, *Seers of God,* 29-52.

[20] Sara Errington, "Wonders and the Creation of Evangelical Culture in New England, 1720-1820," (Ph.D. diss, Brown University, 2000).

phenomena that stood wholly outside the strict control of commercialism, rationalism, or social mores—to advocate marginal positions. Not exactly physical or preternatural "wonders" as the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries used that term, these eighteenth-century wonders presented themselves as *internalized* experiences of a radical kind—dreams, visions, spiritual possession, feelings and sensations, and "openings." Beginning with the Great Awakening's first stirrings in the 1720s and 30s, through the American Revolution, into the early nineteenth century's "Second Great Awakening," and arguably, on to the spiritual revivalism of mid-nineteenth-century America, colonists' wondrous spiritual experiences authorized them to speak and write both about their own lives and also the broader social and political issues of the day.

These narratives have other legacies, of course. Shipwreck narratives exploded in popularity in the nineteenth century to become a kind of pulp fiction. Captivity narratives, too, achieved their heydey in the nineteenth century. Although the structures that had made sense of wondrous "news" in the seventeenth century fell away over the course of the eighteenth century, one scholar has convincingly argued that James Franklin's *Courant* and the spread of newspapers in America carried on some of the spiciest wonder stories as discrete, disembodied units of "news."[21] The narrative form persisted, even when its explanatory or persuasive power for politics and society was lost.

Nonetheless, I think it is arguable that such writings connect the seventeenth century to writers such as Ralph Waldo Emerson. I will not suggest that we see an early form of American pragmatism emerging here. Still, the focus of colonial wonder writings

[21] Nord, "Teleology and News," 9-38.

on lived experience rather than unchanging philosophical truth, on process rather than end, on transformation rather than static being, all sound similar to the notions articulated by that other set of writers who so famously grappled with experiencing American nature in a spiritually transformative way: nineteenth century "transcendentalists," particularly Thoreau and Emerson. The arguments I credit to these texts at times echo closely those of Emerson when he argues that Americans should create a new identity for themselves by shaking off tradition and finding new relations, creating new forms.

I certainly am not suggesting that the American experience of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was inherently exceptional. In fact, I believe the narrative strategies that I trace here are shared in several sites of international Reform Protestantism. The mix of identity politics and authentication through lived experience that was privileged by these writings was an acknowledged form of (self-)authorization in the era. I am suggesting, however, that in one way or another, "Americans" struggling to define a spiritually and socially authoritative identity for themselves have long found it useful to oppose "experience" to "tradition," to contrast the violence of American natural spaces to the tameness of English and European nature in favorable ways, and simultaneously to value rhetorical arts that enable a textual embodiment of radical, life-altering experiences as a means to address pressing social and political concerns.

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